The nevertary Duty of Family Prayer, and the eptorable Condition of Prayerles Families confideredy in al Letter from a Minister to his Parishioners. With Prayers for their Ufe.

The Young-man's Monitor : thewing the great Happiness of early Picty, and the dreadful Confe-

A few Cautions and Directions in order to the Hick Worthip of God, as appointed by the Church

of Regland. encitor of hour mand A lette stimiles. The Country Minister's Instruction to his Young Patishioners at Esfer, who delire to come to the Communion. To which is added, some Directions for their future Behaviour, and Prayers proper for

the Sacrament and for daily Devotion, Objections against it consider'd; and some Cauriprovends a fracceleful Discharge of its

The Christian Peace-Maker. By a Member of

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the Church of England.

The Are of Spelling and Reading English, with Proper and Uleful Leffons for Children, Prayers,

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A thore Grammer for the English Tongue: For the Use of English Schools. Dedicated to the Honourable Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge. Both by William Thener, M. A. Mafter of the Free School at Stemferd in Lincolofbire. Pettoral Advice to young persons, in order to

Pattoral Advice to a young Person lately confir-

A Discourse concerning Wilful Sine, and Sine of Infirmity. With another of Restitution. By the Right Reverend Richard, late Lord Bihop of

## RULE of CONSCIENCE;

OR,

Bishop TATLOR's

Ductor Dubitantium

ABRIDGED.

By RICHARD BARCROFT, Curate of Christ Church in Surrey.

In Two VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

Printed for S. BILLINGSLEY, at the Judge's Head in Chancery-Lane. 1725.

Нопроскава Cannot but think it a Circumitanten aldervich divisible A to me, as an A. heideer of this excellent Work, that You, who have in general the belt Right in to, my Agknowlessaments to have cereanly a most distinct Head in AberKryzlame: ANDEN



To the RIGHT HONOURABLE

# GENERAL WILLIAM STEWART

SIR,

Cannot but think it a Circumstance very favourable to me, as an Abridger of this excellent Work, that You, who have in general the best Right to my Acknowledgments, have certainly a most just A 2 one

## The Dedication.

one to this Address. There is not the least Necessity of pointing out, to those who know You, the near Relation between my Patron, and my Subject. And indeed, the greatest Work of one of the best of Men; a Work, wholly defigned to enforce the Duties of Religion and Morality; could not, without great Impropriety, be inscribed to any Person, in whom both those Characters are not eminently conspicuous.

Even those superior Talents in humane Life, which recommended You to the

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## The Dedication.

Favour and Esteem of several fucceeding Princes, cannot, I persuade my self, but appear still in a stronger Light, from the steady Regard You have expressed for the Honour and Service of God Almighty. A lasting Instance of This you have more particularly given, in contributing fo largely to ward erecting to him an House of Publick Worship. And that Your Alms too, may ascend up with this Monument of your Piety, as a Memorial before him; You intend shortly to found a Seminary for the Instructi-

# The Dedication

on of poor Children in the Principles and Duties of that holy Religion, which, it is the principal Design of this Work to explain and

promote.

After mentioning these Instances of the pious and laudable Zeal, wherewich You are animated for the Advancement of Religion and Virtue, I should disappoint the publick Expectation, in omitting to specify the noble Benefaction, calculated for the same Glorious Ends, which You lately conferred on All Souls College, in that most ancient mo

# The Dedication.

and famous Seat of Learning, the University of Ox-

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These are Actions, SIR, which I chuse to mention, as more properly comporting with the Nature and Design of the Work, which I here presume to lay before You. Not that I am a Stranger to Your Military Qualifications, which have justly raised You to the honourable Character You fustain: But the Celebration of These, ought rather to be the Subject of History, than of an Address prefatory to a Work of this kind. Iam

## The Dedication.

a Performance, intended to inculcate the Duties of Religion and Virtue, is less necessary to You, who know so well how to practice them: But this very Consideration will justify my Ambition of having it known, that I have been encouraged in it, by so Great, and so Good a Man. Tam,

S24 00 62

Your most obliged, most grateful,

and most humble Servant,

August 17.

Richard Barcroft.

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#### THE

# PREFACE.



HIS Abridgment having been undertaken at my Instance, I think my self obliged to give some Account of the Motives, up-

on which I was induced to advise it.

Thro' all the Writings of Bishop Taylor there runs a bright Vein of Piety. His Diction is expressive and animated, tho' not always correct; and his Sentiments bold and masterly, tho' he is sometimes too disfuse and exuberant in his Explications. And, perhaps some may be of Opinion, that, where

## The PREFACE.

where his Method and Design seemed to require strict Argumentation, he has affected to make more frequent Citations from humane Authors than was necessary, in order to embellish his Writings, according to the Genius of the Times wherein he wrote, with the finest Flowers from them.

This general Character of the Works published by that learned and excellent Prelate, is not perhaps more conspicuously verified in any Part of them, than in the great Work, which he published under the Title of Ductor Dubitantium, or Rule of Conscience: Wherein it might have been expected from so able a Casuist, that the Nature of his Subject would have contributed, in some measure, to moderate and repress the Luxuriancy of his Fancy, and the Inclination he so frequently discovers towards intermixing his Argument with common Places of Learning,

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## The PREFACE.

It is probably owing to one or more of these Causes, that a Book, in which, among some Faults and Errors, there are perhaps more Beauties than in any one Book extant in the English Tongue, bath not succeeded, or been perused, in a Degree equal to the Merit of it. I apprehended therefore, but with all Deference to the Judgment of other Persons, that an Abridgment of it, if well performed, might be of good Service to the Publick. And believing the Abridger duly qualifyed for the Performance; I thought he could not employ his Time, in a manner either more useful to others, or more improving to himself in the Course of his Studies, than by undertaking it.

How well be bath executed his Defign, must be left to the Judgment of the Reader. For, having had no Opportunity of perusing his Papers, either before they were sent to the Press, or since they were printed off; I am alto-

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## The PREFACE.

altogether incapable of making a Judgment in the Case my self.

I shall only add, that in my humble Opinion, and according to the narrow compass of my Knowledge, there is no Work extant in any Language, that appears more to want, or more to deferve, an Abridgment.

# Richard Fiddes.



Programmed of Good, and Evil, in arder

THE they were from to a Page 18.



The Titles of the Chapters, and the Rules in each Chapter of the first and Second Books.

## BOOK J. word BOOK J.

Of Conscience, the Kinds of Conscience, and the general Rules of Conducting them.

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The Conscience of a vicious Man is a bad Judge, and an imperfett Rule. p. 26

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In Conscience, that which is first is truest, easiest, and most useful.

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# RULE OF CONSCIENCE, ABRIDGED.

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Of CONSCIENCE, the KINDS of it, and the general Rules of Conducting them.

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The Rule of Conscience in General.

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Conscience is the Mind of Man governed by a Rule, and measured by the Proportions of Good and Evil, in order to Practice: viz. to conduct all our Relations, and all our Intercourse between God, our Neighbour, and our Selves; that is, in all moral Actions.

A S God supporteth the Nature of Things by his Power, and ordereth the Events of Things by his Providence; so he directeth B the the Actions of reasonable Creatures by certain Laws, which are put into a Man's Mind as into a Treasury or Repository. Some of these Laws are implanted in his very Nature; fome are conveyed into the Mind by fubsequent Actions; by Education and politive Sanction; by Learning and Custom. And as that Providence which governs all the World, is nothing else but God present by his Providence; so is he present to our Hearts by his Laws, and rules in us by his Substitute, our Conscience: So that when we call God to Wirness, we only mean that our Conscience is right, and that God and his Vicar, our Conscience, know it. In short, God and our Conscience, like relative Terms, seem to infer each other: For if there were not a nearer Relation between them than is commonly imagined, it would be difficult to account for that Trouble, Terror, and Amazement, Mengenerally feel upon the Commission of a vile or cruel Action, be it done never so secretly. They cannot help feeling inward Causes of Fear, tho' they are secure from without; or, in other Words, they are forced to fear God, when they are under no Apprehensions from Men.

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But before we proceed to a distinct Explication of the Parts of this Rule, it may not be improper to consider, whether it be possible

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Sible for a Man to be wholly without Conscience?

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In order to the Determination of this Question, let it be observed, that Conscience is sometimes taken for the *Practical intellective Faculty*; so we say, the Law of Nature, and the Fear of God, is written in the Conscience of every Man.

Sometimes it is taken for the habitual Perfwasion and Belief of the Principles written there; as when we say, such a one is a good Man, and makes a Conscience of his Ways.

Or, the word Conscience is used effectively, for any fingle Operation or Action of Conscience; as when we say, I make a Conscience of taking up Arms in this particular Cause. Of the first and last Acceptation of the word Confcience, there is no doubt: For the last may, but the first can never be lost, But for the fecond; it may, like any other Habit, be loft, as to the Degrees of more or less; tho' this with more difficulty than any thing elfe, because it is founded so immediately in Nature, so exercised in all the Actions and Entercourses of our Lives, and so affifted by the Grace of God, that it is next to impossible to lose the Habit wholly. Conscience being the Worm that never dies, it feems hard, that That should be made the Instrument to punish us to eternal Ages, which we never found to have any Influence, or B 2 that

So that when Men do Things against their Consciences, it is no otherwise than as they do Things against their Reason; and as we never say that a Man is wholly without Reason, when he abuses it to any vile Purposes; so neither should we say, that a Man is without Conscience, when he acts against it in this or that particular Instance.

But we shall the better understand the Nature, Use, and Offices of Conscience, by considering the Parts of the Rule separately.

I. Conscience is the Mind of a Man.

When God fent the bleffed Jesus into the World to perfect all Righteousness, and to teach the World all his Father's Will; it was faid, I will give my Laws in your Hearts, and in your Minds will I write them. That is, you shall be governed, as you have hitherto been, by the Law of natural and effential Equity and Reason, by that Law which is implanted in every Man's Nature: And whatfoever besides this shall be injoined you, shall be written in your Minds by the Spirit, who shall write all the Laws of Christianity in the Tables of your Consciences. He shall make you understand and relish them; because, you shall see, you need them, and cannot be happy without them. He shall call them to your Mind, furnish you yo the yo

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### Conscience in General.

you with sufficient Reasons for observing them, and make them appear as natural to you, as those wherewith you were born.

Thus Conscience is the Mind; and God writing his Laws in our Minds, informs our Conscience, and furnishes it with Laws, Rules, and Measures; and it is therefore called by St. Paul, the Law of the Mind. And when the Conscience is thus directed how to distinguish Good from Evil, how to please God, how to do Justice and Charity to our Neighbour, and how to govern our selves; when the Revelations of Christ, and the Injunctions of God are fully laid up in our Minds; then is the Mind perfectly instructed to every good Work.

II. Conscience is the Mind of a Man go-

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If to a firm and enlighten'd Reason, we join an honest Heart full of Simplicity and close Attention, and readily disposed to affent to the Truth; we have all That by which the Conscience is informed and amended, guided and preserved in its just Measures, Strength and Relations. For the Rule of Conscience is all that Knowledge of Things and Rules, by which God would have Good and Evil to be measured; that is, the Will of God communicated to us by any means, either by Reason or Revelation. For God being the Origin of all Good, and Good being B 3

only a Conformity to him, or to his Will; the Measures he appoints are to limit and determine us. For we can no more make the Measures of Good and Evil, than we can make the Good it felf. We may indeed give the Inftance in which the Good is measured; but the Measure it self is the Will of God. It is good to obey humane Laws; but for this Reason, because it is the Will of God that we should obey them: And tho' Man gives a Law which we are to obey, yet that is not the Rule. For Obedience is made a Duty by the Command of God.

III. Conscience is the Mind of a Man, governed by a Rule, and measured by the

Proportions of Good and Evil.

That is, the Conscience is to be informed of that which God hath declared to be Good or Evil respectively. This Clause is added to the former (of a Rule) because the express Line of the divine Rule is not the adequate Measure of Conscience. For that Man does not always keep a good Conscience, who observes only the Words of a divine Law; but the Proportions also, and Reasons of it, the Similitudes and Relations of it in like instances are the Measures of Conscience. The whole Measure of Conscience, is God's Will made known to us by Reason or Revelation; which, from the feveral Manners, Times, and Parts of its Communicati-OD,

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on, hath got feveral Names, viz. the Law of Nature; the Consent of Nations; Right Reason; the Decalogue; the Sermon of Christ; the Canons of the Apostles; the Ecclesiastical and Civil Laws of Governors; Fame, or the ordinary Reputation of Things, expressed by Proverbs and other Measures of publick Honesty. These being the full Measures of Right and Wrong, of Lawful and Unlawful, will be the Rule of Concience, and the Subject of the present Books.

IV. Conscience is the Mind of a Man, governed by a Rule, and measured by the Proportions of good and Evil, in order to Practice.

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In this, Conscience differs very much from Knowledge, which is employed only about Things and their Relations; and from Faith also, because tho' it be in order to Practice, yet it is not so immediately. That Jesus Christ is the Son of God, our Lord, and our Master, is a Proposition of Faith; and from thence, if we pass on to Practice, it is in Consequence of another Proposition, If he be our Lord, where is his Fear? When David's Heart smote him upon his Adultery and Murder, his Confcience certainly made this Reflection: Adultery and Murder are high Violations of the divine Law, they provoke God to Anger, whose Anger is worse than Death. There is a Conjunction of Faith and practical Knowledge, which are indeed B 4

the Principles of Conscience; but the Subsequent Acts made it strictly and properly Con-Gience. He remembred that he had betrayed Uriah, and debauched his Wife; and upon this finds himself obliged to beg God's Pardon; he condemns himself, but humbly hopes God will forgive him.

V. Conscience is the Mind of a Man, governed by a Rule, measured by the Proportions of Good and Evil, in order to Practice; that is, to conduct all our Relations and Intercourfes between God, our Neighbour, and our Selves; that is, in all

moral Actions. o alder in the book of another This is the final Cause of Conscience, and by this it is diftinguished from Prudence, which is also practical Knowledge reduced to particular Actions. For Prudence has Relation to the Things of the World; but Conscience to the Things relating to God Prudence considers Things as they are profitable or unprofitable; but Conscience as they are lawful or unlawful, honest or dishonest. There are some Actions in which Prudence is not at all concerned, being wholly indifferent to this, or that, with regard to Advantage; but there is no Action in which Conscience can be unconcerned. For tho an Action may, in all its Circumstances, be indifferent to good or bad; yet none can be to to lawful and unlawful; the very being indiffethe

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indifferent making it lawful, because it is indifferent. And in this sense, even our natural Actions are, in some fort, moral, as they come under our Conscience, are permitted by it, and allowed to be innocent. But when they at all relate to another Person, they are of more moral Concernment, and are properly to be considered in this Court. This is the full Effect of Conscience, to conduct all our Relations, all our moral Actions.

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ing iffeThe Duty and Offices of Conscience, are to dictate, and to testify or bear Witness; to accuse or excuse; to loose or bind.

The first Act which is to dictate, is the Act of That which Divines call the outlingnois, the Phylactery or Preserver of the Records of the Laws; and by it we are taught our Duty. This is what is called by St. Paul, the Rom. F. Work of the Law written in our Hearts: 15. And hence it is, that to fin against our Consciences, is so highly inexcusable. But it is always more or less so, in Proportion to the Violence which is offered to the Conscience. For Conscience never fails to dictate what it is persuaded of; nor can a Man act against its Suggestions, without offering some Violence to it.

The

The natural Principles of Justice and Religion are its universal Dictates, and are therefore the most obvious; but whatsoever can be plainly and infallibly, by rational Confequences, deduced from them, are, tho' not immediately, yet truly and properly, its Dictates too. Thus it is with regard to clear Revelation. For whatfoever God conveys into the Conscience by a subsequent Act, is placed there to the fame intent with that which, because it began with our Nature, we call natural. And the Reason is plain; because all that Law by which God governs us, must be written in our Hearts, since it is that by which all our Actions are to be guided. Whatfoever therefore is done in Opposition to what Nature or that practical Reason in which all Men agree, or to those Notices which God plainly by a fublequent Act or Revelation conveys into the Mind, is acting directly against Conscience, as every Man's Experience must inform him.

Tis the part of Conscience likewise to bear Witness. So St. Paul, Their Conscience bearing Witness; and Conscience, thus understood, is a practical Memory. For as practical Notices seated in the Understanding do, in a sense, make the Understanding to be Conscience; so the Actions of our Life, preserved in our Memory, and laid open to practical Judgments, change the Memory also

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into Conscience. It is not likely that Man, who has a real Superiority over Beasts by the Use of Reason, should be a stranger to his own Actions, as they are to theirs, for the want of it; or that the Evil he commits, should not be remember'd with some Marks of Displeasure.

Another Act of Conscience is to accuse, or St. Paul subjoins these to the Acts above-mentioned; their Conscience bearing Witness, and their Thoughts the mean time accusing or excusing one another. If upon a Review of the Actions of our Lives, we find that in the main they have been regularly exerted; our Conscience immediately acquits us, gives Ease to the Mind, and difpels those Fears which naturally arise in it, upon a consciousness of Guilt. But when, upon examining our Actions, by God's Rule, the engrafted Word, the Word of God written in our Hearts, we find we have deviated from it; the Acculations and Clamours of Conscience, are ever ready to break in upon us; and if, at any time, they chance to fleep, yet they are easily awakened, and make the evil Man restless. Be the Vice never so privately committed, yet no Care nor Watchfulnels can give Security. There dwells within a Principle of Fear, that can never leave us till 'tis done away by Repentance.

To loofe or bind, are likewise, tho' not directly, Acts of Confcience. Upon viewing the Records, or Legislative part of Confcience, it binds to Duty; upon viewing the Act, it gives us Comfort or binds to Punishment. The binding to Duty, is so an Effect of Conscience, that it cannot be separated from it; but the binding to Punishment, is an Act of Conscience also, as it is a judge, and is designed to affright the Offender, and to punish him. And the Mind thus troubled and affrighted, is what the Scripture calls a wounded Spirit. It is not possible to point out all the Evils of a troubled Conscience, or wounded Spirit; but fome of the principal, which I shall here touch upon, are very obvious and remarkable.

The first is, the Accusations and Disturbance of the Mind, when it is in Pain; then, when it needs most comfort, it shall be most disquieted. Prosperity indeed may bribe or abuse the Conscience, may fill it with Noise, divert it with Business, blind it with Gayety and Equipage, and by a thousand other ways still its Suggestions: But when a Man is smitten of God, robbed of the Allurements and Opportunities of Sin, and Conscience is restored to its native Force; then it speaks its own Sense, and is ever loudest, when the Man is poor, or sick, or miserable.

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The fecond Effect is Shame, which Conscience never fails to inflict secretly; there being a fecret Turpitude and Baseness in Sin, which cannot be better expressed than by its Opposition to Conscience. A good Conscience makes a Man bold; he reflects, that his Behaviour has been innocent and rational; whereas, he that fins, fins against Reafon, the Honour and Perfection of his Nature; and fuch a Behaviour cannot but be attended with Shame. The Spirits naturally flag, the Mind feels a Charge of Cowardice and Meanness, upon our behaving contrary to our Reason, and the Light of our Minds. And therefore he who faid, If I were fure God would pardon me, and Men would not know my Sin; yet I should be ashamed to sin, because of its natural and essential Baseness; said but what every Man may find Reason for saying.

There is another Effect which cannot well be described, either by him who seels, or by him who sees it; as being altogether without Limit and without Order. It is a distraction of Mind, indeterminate, confused Thoughts, bewildered, slying every thing, pursuing nothing. It was Nebuchadnezzar's Case, his Thoughts troubled him. Shame accompanies the Act of Sin, but this is the Confusion which follows upon the Commission of it. And the Reason is, Men find themselves

themselves in a Condition they did not expect; they know not yet what it is, where they are, nor whither it will carry them. Pleasure was their pursuit; and when their Passions and Imaginations are once gratified, Then fucceeds a Pain they thought not of. Their Spirits are hurried and confused: like a Man taken in some Act of Lust or Theft, he would escape somewhere, but he knows not where; would do fomething, but he knows not what. Indeed, this Confusion and first Amazement of Conscience in some disingenuous and baser Natures, proceeds to Impudence and Hardness of Countenance. But Conscience can have no Hand in this; for whatfoever of this nature happens, is in direct opposition to Conscience; and therefore it commonly goes on to Obstinacy, hardness of Heart, a resolution not to repent, a disregard to God, and to an utter Reprobation. For if the Conscience were suffered to proceed regularly, this Confusion, when it comes to be stated, and the Man hath well considered, generally passes on to Fear; which is properly the next Effect of a guilty Confcience.

For Shame and Fear are never far afunder. Sin makes us ashamed before Men, and afraid of God. A consciousness of Guilt makes a Man a Coward, and rimorous as a Child. Thus it is with Tyrants and injuri-

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ous Persons; they are astraid of Evil because they act it; oppress the bravest Men, and dread the meanest. They are guarded with Swords and Poisons, and tho' they threaten terribly, are themselves most astraid. The Mind, in this situation, is perpetually restless. The Man is put to many mean Shifts to excuse his Crime before Men; and yet cannot excuse it to God, or to himself. He therefore has Recourse to the Arts of Forgetsulness; he would not reslect upon his Pain; he runs to Weakness for Excuse, and to Sin for a Comfort; and in the Uneasiness and Disorder of his Soul, to the Methods and Paths of Hell for a Sanctuary.

This Fear and Restlesness, thus inslicted by Conscience, doth not only encrease at our Death, but after it is likewise the beginning of Hell. The Conscience, in the separate State, doth perpetually accuse, and with an insupportable Amazement, dreads the approach of the great Day. The Fury within will compell the Man to consess, and then he is prepared for the horrible Sentence, as they who upon the Rack, first accuse themselves, and then are hurried to Execution. This is the Progress of an evil Conscience in

its Acts of binding.

But if it be asked, by what Instrument Conscience does thus torment a Man for his Sins; whether it gives Torment, as it understands, stands, by the use of some natural Power; or whether God inflicts it, or whether it proceeds from bare Opinion; or by our being perswaded of some sure Events which are to follow upon Sin; by Religion or Belief; or lastly, by mere Bugbear and Illusion? I answer;

That it may afflict a Man by all thefe. For it is naturally inquisitive and busy, querulous and unealy. But because Men have a thousand little Arts to still the Voice of Confeience. God often finds means to rouse it, and makes it fick and troublesome. But how fantastick soever some of those Instruments may feem from which we receive our Torture; as a clap of Thunder, a Dream, a fuperstitious Tale, and the like; yet this does not prove that the Fear is vain, but rather that God is the Author of Conscience, and will, notwithstanding all the Arts of Concealment, fer up a Tribunal and a Rack in in the Court of Conscience. And therefore God thus threatens wicked Men; The Lord shall give thee a trembling Heart, and failing of Eyes, and forrow of Mind, and thy Life shall hang in doubt before thee, and thou shalt fear Day and Night, and Shalt have no affurance of thy Life. But the great Instrument of bringing this to pass, is that strong and universal Persuasion among Men, that Evil shall be to them that do Evil,

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or in the Scripture Phrase, that every Man shall be, some time or other, rewarded ac-

cording to his Deeds. And International

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But if this be the Case, say some, why is the Conscience less shocked at some Sins, than at others; since in those of the highest Malignity, we find great difference in the Fears of Men, even when, by reason of their extream Malignity, there can be no difference in their Guilt?

It may be answered; tho all Sins are damnable, yet not only in the feveral Degrees of Sin, but in the highest Instances of it there is great difference, arising partly from the divine Threatnings, from Fame and Opinion, or from other Causes. Some are called crying Sins, that is, fuch as call aloud for Vengeance; against which God has denounced horrid Plagues, and which do not often go unpunished in this Life; such are Sacrilege, Oppression of Widows and Orphans, Murder, Sodomy, and the like. Now he who is guilty of any of these Crimes, recollects the angry Words of God, and with Anguish reflects upon the difficulty of escaping Vengeance in this Life.

But besides this, God hath placed in the Minds of Men a natural Aversion to some Sins; such are the Abhorrence against unnatural Lusts; a natural Pity, to guard against Murder and Oppression; and a sense of Pie-

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ty and Religion, against Sacrilege. He therefore who commits any of these Sins, breaks thro' those natural Guards which were placed before him, and so wounds his Conscience not only by a moral, but a natural Instrument. And befides, there are in these Sins certain Circumstances of horror, which cannot but disturb and amaze the Mind. Thus, in Murder, the Circumstances and State of Death is in it felf terrible, but much more fo, when the Murtherer sees, and sees alone, that himself acted it. So in the Oppression of Widows and Orphans, the Heart is so frequently and fo strongly moved, and the Eyes to often meet with fo many fad and mournful Spectacles; that if a Man would contrive to make his Soul uneasy, he could not lay before it a more moving Scene. Fame likewife and Opinion do, in such Instances, strongly affect the Conscience. That which justly derives upon us a great Shame among Men, will oblige us to fear and expect Vengeance from God: for that Action which is truly shameful, must, in like manner, be truly formidable. Opinion also has some Influence in this Affair. The Fears of Childhood are not shaken from the Conscience in old Age: And as the Perswasions of our Childhood in moral Actions are permanent, so is the Fear and Hope, which were the Sanctions of thole Perswasions. In short, Education, Society, Cuftom,

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Custom, the States of Life, the Religion, or particular Perswasion of Men, have each their share in this Effect.

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What I would observe from these Remarks, is this; that we are not to judge of the Greatness or Horror of any Sin, barely by the Affrightments of Conscience. For as some great Sins escape the Rod of God in this Life, so are the Sinners often free from great Affrightments. If a Man sears not, it doth not therefore follow, that he has no cause to fear; nor can the Man himself think, that his Crime will be at all lessened, by his seeming to behave as if it were no Crime at all.

But by the Measures of binding, we may judge of the other Act of Conscience, looseing or absolving. This Absolution, when justly pronounced, is the highest and most rational Pleasure the Mind can seel in this Life. But we are to be very cautious, that we mistake not Boldness for Peace, and hardness of Heart for a good Conscience. For a Man may be Quiet, and at Peace, because he enquires not, or understands not, or cares not, or because he is abused in the Notices of his Condition: But the true Peace of Conscience is thus to be distinguished.

Peace of Conscience is properly an Ease and Calmues of Mind, after a levere and impartial Enquiry. It is never to be found in Persons of profigere Lives. It is a Pruit of C 2 Holines:

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Holiness; and therefore, the Quietness we may at any time observe in wicked Men, we are to alcribe to any other Cause, rather than Innocence. The Adulterous Woman eatxxviii. 65. eth and wipeth her Mouth, and faith, I have

done no Wickedness.

That is a true and Holy Peace which we feel, not in the Days of Prosperity, but in the Sealons of Sorrow and Affliction. Then it is that a Man fearches every where for Comfort; and if his Heart encreases not his other Misfortunes by condemning him, then hath he Peace with God! Not that we are to confider this Peace of Mind, as a fign that God hath pardoned all our Sins, but those only about which we have made a particular Enquiry. If I find Peace after an impartial Examination of those Particulars, then have I Peace towards God, in regard to them: But whether I am pardoned for other Sins, is another, and more uncertain Confideration. We are not to judge of our Condition by the Ease we feel, but by the Causes of that Ease. And the' I know God will pardon those Sins of which I have repented; I am not therefore to conclude, from the Eafe I feel, that he has pardoned those of which I have not particularly repented. And hence it is, that a true Peace of Conscience is always attended by an holy Fear, a Fear to offend, and a Fear of God's Displeasure for our

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our Offences; a Fear, which, whilst it lasts, will fix our Peace upon the furest Foundations. So that we fee true Peace of Confcience cannot take its Original from popular Noises, from the Flattery and Opinions of Men; but that it is a Peace from within, relying upon God, and its own just Meafures, and tent bonoicland richer in bolishing

And now, this whole procedure of Conscience, flows from a Perswasion partly natural, partly habitual, of this Proposition, which all Nations of the World have always confidered as the Band of their Religion, Morality, and private Transactions of Justice and Decency, that God is a just Rewarder of all our Actions.

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Thus far of the Nature and Offices of Conscience. We shall now consider by what general Methods we are to treat our Conscience, that it may be of Use to us, in all the Intentions of it, and in the Designs of God.

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We are to be careful that Prejudice or Passion, Fancy or Affection, Error or Illusion, be not mistaken for Conscience.

We immediately see the Reason and Expediency of this Rule, when we confider how common it is for Men to pretend Conscience for all those Actions which fall under

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der the Notice of Mankind, and whose Nature therefore cannot be concealed. Thus you'll frequently find the Motives to unjust War, to Schism and Rebellion, taking their Rise from a Pretence of Conscience. Sometimes you will find Men, who suspect their Brother of a Crime, and are (as they say) perswaded in their Conscience that he did it. And thus, Suspicion, Jealousie, Disobedience,

and Rebellion, are made Conscience.

But the intent of this Rule is, that we should observe the strict Measures of Conscience; otherwise bare Illusion may make a Conscience, as in the Cases above-mentioned. If Error or Passion dictates, and we mistake them for Conscience, we generally think our felves bound to obey; and therefore this Rule advises us to enquire into the Information and Inducement; and if we can discern the Abuse, the Evil may be avoided. For a Man's Conscience cannot be malicious, his Will indeed may; but, if the Error be once discovered, the Conscience, that is, the practical Understanding cannot, unless it were possible for a Man to believe what himtelf knows cannot be true. Now in doubtful Cases, we may be affisted by the following Measures.

First, we are to suppose our Consciences to be misinformed, when we are not willing to enquire into the Particulars. He that searches fea rig it n ly. diff Tra but Fac

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fearches desires to find, and thus far he is right; for Truth can never hurt a Man, tho' it may check his Vice, and reprove his Folly. But he must likewise put on all the Indisference he can; and not like an unskilful Traveller, chuse the Way that looks fairly, but that which leads surely. We are, in Fact, asraid of Truth, when we are unwilling to search after it.

Secondly, He that refolves upon the Conclusion before the Premisses, who enquires into Particulars with a defign not to shake it if it be false, and to establish it only if it be true, is commonly fure to mistake, at least cannot be fure that he does not mistake. This holds in all those Cases where the Particular unknown, is not fecured by a General which is known. Tho' I am not able to prove argumentatively the Doctrine of Christ's Intercession, and yet resolve to listen to no Arguments against this Doctrine; yet do I not hereby act against this Rule, because I am predetermined by a Proposition which cannot fail me. He who cannot chuse for himself, hath chosen well enough, if he relies upon One that can certainly chuse for him; and if he finds fuch a One, he may prudently trust him in those Particulars wherein he cannot judge for himself, and wherein the other can; at least, wherein he cannot come to know that the other cannot.

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Thirdly,

Thirdly, Illusion cannot be distinguished from Conscience, if in our Enquiry we take up with improper Methods, and incompetent Instruments. He who chuses rather to follow the giddy ignorant Multitude, than the wife Guides of Souls; or a Man who is his Partner in the Question, rather than him who is difinterested; or a Man of a different Profession from him, whose Office and Business it is to answer; hath poor Reason to imagine he shall fucceed in his Enquiries. The Particulars of applying this Remark to Practice in all special Cases, I shall afterwards enumerate; at present I shall only observe, that a Man may confent to an evil Authority, and rest in a wrong Persuasion, and be guided by an abused Conscience, so long as we fuffer our Perfuafions to be fixed and determined by improper Instruments.

Fourthly, we are to suspect that Determination which does apparently serve an Interest, and but obscurely any pious end. It is no inconsiderable Objection against those Propositions, which the Romish Church so earnestly contends for, against the other parts of Christendom; that they so evidently serve the Ends of Covetousness and Ambition. The Pope's Power over Princes, and of Dispensation; the Exemption of the Clergy from secular Jurisdiction; the Doctrines of Purgatory and Indulgences, with that of Trangatory and Indulgences, with that of Trangatory

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fubstantiation; without the Warrant or Authority of Scripture; have so plain a Tendency to both those Ends, as a considering Man cannot but observe. It was a just and fine observation of the Son of Sirach; Con- Ecclus. fult not with a Woman touching her of xxxvii.11. whom the is jealous; nor with a Coward. in matters of War; nor with a Merchant, concerning Exchange; nor with a Buyer, concerning felling; nor with an envious Man. of thankfulness; nor with an unmerciful Man, of kindness; nor with the sothful, for any Work; nor with the Hireling, for a Year of finishing Work; nor with an idle Servant, of much Business; bearken not to these in any matter of Counsel. Their Interest will direct their Opinion. It is possible indeed, that Truth and Interest may be very confistent; as where Priests preach the Necessity of paying legal Tythes; or a poor Man pleads for Charity; the Truths which they urge are not prejudiced by the Interest they have in them. For here the End of Piety is not obscure, nor the Truth of the Proposition uncertain.

Fifthly, If the Proposition tends to maintain a Vice, or lessen a Virtue, it cannot be the Result of Conscience, but only of Error or Abuse. But this holds only when the Answer tends directly to Sin, not when it does so only accidentally. He who marries

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a proud imperious Wife, and turns her away that he may live at ease; if, upon confulting a Friend, he is advised to take her again, but fays, that then he shall not be able to live innocently; if his Friend proves to him that his Fault in this Instance is no fufficient warrant in neglecting a Duty in another; he is rightly answered and directed. But if he had advised him to drink intemperately, or to come into any other guilty Methods to remove his Sorrow; his Counfel had tended to Sin directly.

Laftly, besides the Evidence of the Thing, and an exact Conformity to the Rule; there is ordinarily no other collateral affurance, but an honest sincere endeavour to make the best enquiries we can, and in taking the advice of the wife Son of Sirach, Above all exxvii.15. this, pray to the most high, that he will direct thy Way in Truth.

Ecclus.

### RULE IV.

The Conscience of a vicious Man is an evil Judge, and an imperfect Rule.

I mean here, both the fuperior and inferior Part of Conscience; for the Rule notes, that the Acts of Conscience may be made invalid, both as it is a Ruler, and as it is a Judge. DEOTE

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The Superior Part of it, that which contains in it all the natural and rational Principles of good Actions, such as, God is to be worshipped; do to others as thou woulds have others do to thee, and the like; is, as long as a Man has the use of his Reason, a fure and regular Judge in the prime Principles of Reason and Religion. But then these Principles are to be considered, either as they are habitually incumbent on the Mind, or are actually applied to Practice. In the former Sense, they can never be totally extinguished; for they are connatural to the Mind, and will constantly return, whenever a Man ceases from suffering that Violence which seemed to have erased them. But when these Principles come to be applied to Practice, a strong Vice and a malicious Heart may draw a Veil over them, and they shall not then appear to diforder or shock the sensual Refolution. A Man cannot ordinarily think that God is not to be worshipped; but Drunkenness, or a violent Passion, a transient and unnatural Violence intervening in a particular Cafe, may suspend the Application of that Principle, and hinder the Man from confidering his Rule.

But there are likewise some other Principles, which thus far, may as truly be called natural; as they are certainly discoverable by natural Reason; which yet, because they

are not fo connatural to the Soul, nor fo eafily, nor so plainly evident as the other, may possibly be lost; at least, obscured to all purposes of usefulness, and Principles directly opposite may be admitted into the Rule of Conscience. And, with regard to the Principles I am here speaking of, some whole Nations have fo far abused their Confciences, that Fornication, Over-reaching, Theft, Incest in some kinds, Drunkennels, and the like, have been thought lawful. And to this Day the Practice of Duelling, by private Persons, seems to be thought lawful by a whole fet of Men. These are they of whom the Apostle says, They are given over to believe a lie, and are delivered up to a reprobate Mind.

But this is certain, that whenever the fuperior or ruling Part of Conscience is an imperfect Rule, there the inferior is an evil Judge: It acquits the Criminal, and condemns the Innocent; calls Evil Good, and Good Evil. And this is to be understood, when the Persuasion of the erring Conscience is lasting and hearty, not when it is fudden, and carried away by the impetuofity of a Passion; for here the Conscience condemns, as soon as the Action is over, into which it was hurried and betray'd; and never proceeds, but where the Errors are by natural Reafon; which spirital bas baxil

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EV.

All Constiences are to walk by the same Rule, and that which is just to one, is so to all in the like Circumstances.

If all Men were to be governed by the same Laws, had they the same Interests, and the fame degrees of Understanding, they would eafily fee the Truth and Reasonableness of this Conclusion. But we are to take notice, that Men are infinitely differenced by their own Acts and Relations, by their Understandings, by Interest and Mistake, by Ignorance, or Malice, and the like. And hence it is that two Men may be damned for doing two things directly contrary to each other. A Jew may perish for not keeping his Sabbath, and a Christian for keeping it; one may perish for receiving, and another for not receiving the Holy Sacrament. But this variety is not directly of God's making, but of Man's. God obliges us to walk by the same Rule, and to this End, to be of the same Mind; that is, to direct our selves constantly by the strict and exact Rule of Conscience. But it would be impossible to observe this Precept, if there were not one Rule, and this Rule plain and eafy: And the Reason is evident, because Men

Men of weak Minds are equally obliged to observe this Precept, with those of clearer Understandings. The Rule therefore is plain, and written in every Man's Heart; and as every Man's Reason is the same thing; so

likewife is every Man's Conscience.

Nor is the Unity of the Rule at all prejudiced by any diversity of Cases: For instance: Autolychus robbed the Gardens of Trebonius, begged his Pardon, and had it. When Trebonius was Conful he robbed him again; and when, as a Thief, he was brought before him, he again asked Pardon; but Trebonius condemned him to the Gallies. For he who as a private Man was bound to forgive a repenting Trespasser; as a Magistrate was obliged not to forgive him; and both thefe were upon the fame account. All Questions and Enquiries of this kind, should fome way relate to the Rule, and be tried only by a plain measure of Justice and Religion; and not be determined by their relation to any Propositions which are no ways concerned with it. For that is always one and eafy; these are infinite, doubtful, and contradictory. But, because all Men cannot make general Propositions, and apply em to particular Cases; there will be an eternal Necessity for spiritual Guides, whose Employment it must be to give just and determinate Answers to difficulties of this kind.

RULE VI.

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VI.

In Conscience that which is first, is truest, easiest, and most useful.

There are some Actions, which at first fight, and in their very Nature, appear as directly unreasonable, and against a Commandment, as any other Immorality, tho' of the deepest Die; and yet, object the finfulness of them to the Authors, and they will give them fuch a turn to mangle and difguife them, that they do not only fometimes think themselves thereby justified, but also lessen the Persuasions other Men are under of their Guilt. Thus it is in the Question of Images: The worshipping of any does as plainly and eafily contradict the second Commandment, as Adultery is forbidden by the feventh. But if we enquire into the Practice of the Church of Rome, explained by the wary determination of the Council of Trent, upon this Article, with the artful and laboured Distinctions of its Patrons; we hall be inclined to judge somewhat more favourably, than otherwise we should have done. And yet all the while the Worship of Images goes forward. If this Command against the worshipping of Images, were to be understood only by the helps of Sophistry and and Distinction; or were not to be taken according to the natural and obvious fense of the words; the Conscience is herein left without a clear Rule, and the Command could neither be fitted for, nor given to the meanest Understandings, as it certainly is. This indeed is to be understood otherwise, when the first Sense of the words has, in its Letter, a Prejudice open and easy to be seen; fuch as the putting out the right Eye, or cutting off the right Hand. The words are plainly figurative, and we are to confider only the Import of them, which is to be understood by the Measures of this Rule; that is, the first and most natural fignification is the best, that which most nearly relates to the Metaphor, the Defign of the speaker, and occasion of the Discourse.

But in all things, where the Precept is plain, and expressed in the proper and unadorned Style of Laws, he that takes the first Sense, is most likely to be well guided. In a War between a King and his Subjects, we are plainly taught by Christ and three of the Apostles, with whom we ought to fide; but if we would engage against our Prince, it does not look fo well, when the Conscience must labour and struggle for its Rule, as when it takes that which lies easy before it.

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Conscience by its several Habitudes and Relations, or Tendencies towards its proper Object, is divided into several kinds.

Conscience, as it relates to its Object, confidered materially, and in the nature of things, is either true, or false, right or wrong. True, when it is rightly informed, and proceeds regularly; False, when it is deceived and missed. Between these stands the probable Conscience; which, with regard, to its Object, may be either right or wrong, just as it is in the Event of Things. The division then of Conscience, with respect to its Object, is threefold. For in all Questions where Notice can certainly be had, he who gets it hath a true Conscience; he that misses it, has a false or erring Conscience: But where the Notices are uncertain, or not well understood, or imperfectly revealed; because the Understanding cannot be fure, the Conscience can be but probable.

But because intellectual Habits employed about the same general Object, become of different Natures only by their formal Tendencies; and the different Manners in which they are affected by the same Object; in

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in order to a just Division of the Kinds of Conscience, we are to consider the right Conscience, either as it is fure, or as it is only confident, but not fure. For an erring, and an unerring Conscience are the same Judge, as to any Effect and Authority upon the Perfon; but yet they differ infinitely in their Rule. For our Conscience is never a good Guide, unless we are truly informed and know it to be fo. For if we are truly informed, and know it not; it is an uncertain and an imperfect Guide. But if we be confidenr, and yet deceived, the uncertainty indeed is taken off; but we may be for all that very milerable. That therefore is the first kind of Conscience, the right sure Conscience: This alone is fit to be our Guide; but this alone is not our Judge.

Conscience; which indeed is misinformed, but yet assents to its Object, with as much considence, as does the right and fure Conscience, but always upon different Reasons. Which, because they are always criminal, tho' the Assent be peremptory and consident: yet the Deception is voluntary in its Cause; and therefore the present Considence can no way warrant the Action. I call this erring Conscience vicious and voluntary in its Principle, because in all Matters of necessary Duty, all God's Laws are plain; and as they

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are calculated for the unlearned as well as learned, it is necessary they should be fo. If therefore there happen any invincible Ignorance, or involuntary Deception, it can be only there where the Rule is not plain; and there the Matter can be but probable, nor the Confcience neither 1000 and mountain

The probable Conscience therefore, is made by fuch an Affent to the Object, as is indeed without Fear, but not without Imperfection. The Thing it felf is of such a Nature, that it cannot give the Mind fufficient Faith or Certainty either way : Because we cannot find that it deferves a full Affent, we therefore give it but an imperfect Affent: These are all the Kinds of Conscience that Consciences; are Superfution, A. Barraq are

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But fometimes the State and Acts of Conscience are imperfect; particularly in doubting and in scrupulous Consciences. Sometimes the Conscience is carried to its Object with an imperfect Assent; and acts upon a deficient Principle. In some Questions, the Arguments on both fides feem fo indifferent, that the Conscience, terrified, and abused by fear or weakness, is affaid to do any thing, and therefore does nothing; but if it be constrained to act, it is determined from without, nor by it felf, by Persuasion, Force, Fear, or the like: So that it never acts without Fear, because upon Reflection, it finds

it has no Warrant, and that therefore whatever it does becomes finful. This is the Imperfection of a doubting Conscience, which, for those Reasons, can neither be a good

Guide, nor a good Judge.

A lefs degree of this Evil is called, the scrupulous Conscience; which is not, as is commonly supposed, a distinct kind of Conscience, but differs from the doubting Conscience only in the Measures and Degrees of the Evil: Something of the Doubt and Fear is taken off, and the Man can act without Sin, but not without Trouble. He is uneasy even when he is most innocent; and the Causes of this, besides some Portion of those weaknesses which make the doubting Consciences, are Superstition, Melancholy, Pufillanimity, and mean Apprehensions of God. So that the' the scrupulous Man may proceed to act without Sin; yet his scruple is feldom innocent, and always calamitous. Now this Conscience may be a right Guide, but dares not be a Judge. Because he may err, he thinks he does. The Effect of this Imperfection, is nothing but an heartless and uncomfortable proceeding in our Duty; we are afraid to rely upon That, which yet we cannot believe will fail us.

The tender Conscience, the bardened, the quiet, the disturbed, and the perverse Con-Science, which some have enumerated, as

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distinct kinds of it, being only the Affections or Appendages of Conscience, as we have here considered it; we shall therefore omit.

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#### CHAP. II.

Of the right, or sure Conscience.

### Side Coo Rule I.

A right Conscience, is that which guides our Actions by right and proportion'd Means, to a right End.

A Hatloever is good for Us or our Neighbours, or any way perfective of our Being as God designed it; all That is our End: And the Means ought to be fuch, as are proper Instruments to procure it. He who intends to live feverely, and to attend the Duties of Religion, his End is good; and thus far his Conscience is right: But if his Conscience tell him, that this End is to be attained by erecting Colleges of Women, and that he should recommend the Doctrines of the Crofs, in the midst of Feasts, Songs, and Society; then it is not right. For a right Conscience is nothing but right Reafon D 3

fon reduced to Practice, and regularly conducting Moral Actions.

## have here confidered it; we shall therefore

In a right Conscience, the practical Judgment, that is, the last Determination to an Action, ought to be sure and evident.

This is plain in all the great Lines of Duty, in Actions determinable by the first Principles of Reason, or Divine Revelation; but it is true also in all those Actions which are conducted by a right Conscience. In the Question of Actions, whose Rule is not notorious and plainly evident, there is or may be a twofold Judgment. The first judges the thing probable, from the differing Sentiments of wife and good Men about it; but in this there is a Fear or Suspicion of the contrary; and therefore, in the direct Act nothing is certain. But there is also a reflex Act of Judgment; which, upon considering that it is certain, that a probable Action may be lawfully done; or elfe, that That which is but probable in the nature of the thing, (as far as we can find) may yet, by the addition of fome Circumstances, and prudential Confiderations, by Equity or Necesfity, become more than probable in the particular; The's I fay, the Conscience be uncertain tain flex noc

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certain in the direct Act; yet it may be certain, right and justly determined in the reflex Act of Judgment; and if it be, it is innocent, and fafe, and what we call the right

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In moral Things we are not ordinarily to expect Demonstration, or mathematical Certainty; and therefore, in Morality, we often call that certain, that is, proper to be cholen, which is only highly probable. is not therefore necessary that the direct Judgment should be fure and evident in all cases, because it is impossible it should be fo: But if it be not supplied by the reflex Act of Judgment, so that the Conscience be either certain in the Object, or in the Act; the whole Procedure is dangerous, the Concience is doubtful, and the Action is a Sin.

The Conscience therefore must be confident; but it must also be able to give sufficient Reason for its being so; at least so much as can fecure the Confidence from Illusion. This it will be enabled to do, by taking all that Care which God has put in our Power; of which I have already faid lomething; and shall say more, in its proper place in the Particoldes of where

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The practical Judgment of a right Conscience is always agreeable to the speculative determination of the Understanding.

This Rule is designed against those whose Understanding is right in the Proposition, but yet declines the Application of it. The Proposition, in its felf, is owned to be true; but when it is applied to their own Case, they see not the Force of it. Thus David pronounced Sentence of Death upon the rich Man who robbed the poor Man of his Ewe Lamb; but when he found himself to be the Man, he likewise found Reasons for rever-We are in all Cases to fing the Sentence. confider the Rule, not the Relation; the Law, not the Person. If it were otherwise, the Conscience could not possibly be either a proper Guide, or Judge. Not that we hereby preclude the exercise of Privileges and Pardons in particular Cases; for That which is binding in the Proposition, may by many intervening Causes, be somewhat loofened in the Particular; of which I am to give account in its due place. But this is certain, that whatfoever Particular, is of the same account with the General, not separated or let loose, by that Hand which first firl ner

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But this Rule reaches farther also; and is true, and so to be understood, not only in the restrained sense in which I have hitherto used the Words Practical and Speculative. as relating to Conscience; but also in their first and larger sense. Thus in Philosophy, if we fay that God, being a Spirit without Parts and Figure, cannot be represented by an Image; tho' this be properly a Philosophic Speculation, and fo no Rule of Conscience; yet when Conscience is to make a Judgment about representing God the Father in Picture, it must not determine practically against that Speculation. For whatsoever is true in one fense, will be still true when it is confidered in another. We are not to think that we are unconcerned in Philosophick Propositions, when we come to use them in Divinity. We must not worship That which our Reason and Senses tell us is below Worship; nor believe That to beinfinite, which we see circumscribed; nor think That greater than the Heavens, which I fee and feel goes into my Mouth The Caution, which is necessary for the due Use of this Proposition, is this: That we be as fure of our Speculation, as of any other Rule which we ordinarily follow; and that we do not miltake vain and uncertain, for true

true Speculation The adopting into the Christian Religion, and the explaining it by the uncertain Philosophic Principles of Plato and Aristotle, has done but little Service to it. Origen and Aguinas, have laboured so unsuccessfully in this Design, that each has been a means of rendering Christianity less pure than it would have been, had they drawn it only from the Fountain of Christand his Apostles; and had laid less stress upon a Philosophy which is so precarious and uncertain of Role of bus

But for the fuller Explication of this Rule, it will not be improper to consider that important Enquiry, which has been made concerning the Use of Reason in Religion. For some Men finding Reason to be the Guide which God has given us, and that it is created with our very Souls, but that Religion is superinduced, and comes after it; they therefore think, that This should not sway and determine That nobleft part of the Creation: And because some things which are faid to be Articles of Faith, feem repugnant to their Reason, they stick to This, and let That go. Here is just cause of complaint; and therefore others fay, Reason is a good Guide in things Reasonable and Humane; but that in Divine things, it is all dark and obscure, and therefore of little or no use in Religion: For here we are to Believe, and

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on both sides, and it will be worth while to examine the Justice of them.

They who argue against the Use of Reafon in Religion, lay, first, that there is given to every Man fufficient Light to guide his Behaviour in the State in which God has placed him. In Actions of humane Intercourfe, and the Notions relating to it, Reafon is our Eye, instructed with sufficient Notices drawn from Nature and Experience, for our regular Deportment. But Man being likewife designed for the Knowledge of God, and spiritual Things, he must have new Capacities and Illuminations from Heaven. Reason cannot discern the things of the Spirit, because they are spiritually discerned. There are some things in our Religion so mysterious, that they are wholly above our Reason; we may admire, but we cannot understand them: And therefore the Spirit of God is fent into the World to subdue our Understandings to the Obedience of Christ. But if, after all, we must use our Reason in Religion, we have but one Reason to which we ought to lubmit; and that is, that we are obliged to believe whatfoever God has faid is true. So that even here the greatest Use of our Region is to teach us to submit it to the Divine Declarations. I may be deceived by my felf, but never by God, even

in any particular Enquiry which gives my Reason the greatest Umbrage. It is enough for me that it is in the Scripture: I will therefore enquire no farther: And I reckon this a fure way of arguing, this is Scripture, therefore it is true; and this is against Scripture, therefore it is false. Besides, Experience will justify this way of thinking. For we often fee, that Men of Wit use their Reason against the God who gave it; and in pursuit of Reason, go beyond Religion. And this was one Caufe, that the Religion of Jesus was so long and so obstinately opposed. The Philosophers would use their Reason, and their Reason would not admit this new Religion. Reason therefore can be of little use in Enquiries into religious Mysteries: For is it not plain, that some Principles of Reason are against some Principles of Faith?

These are the common Pretences against the Use of Reason in Questions of Religion; and are generally recurred to by two forts of Men. The first are those, who being destitute of particular Arguments, have their last recourse to the Authority of Men. Now to these Men, it may very justly be said, let God be True, and every Man a Lyar. If we trust Men concerning God, we do not trust God concerning Men; that is, we do not judge of Men as God hath taught us,

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viz. that they are weak, and that they are Lyars. The Church of Rome gives just cause of complaint, when she not only obliges Men to submit, without any Examination, to what she says upon her own Authority; but also requires as strong an Assent to what she cannot prove, as to what she can prove.

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The other fort of Men are those, who do the fame thing, but under another cover; who not having the Advantages of Union and Government, cannot pretend to a privileged Authority; but being determined to obtrude their Fancies upon the World, and yet not being able to prove the Truth of what they fay, pretend the Spirit of God to be the Author of their Decisions. It is impossible that those Men should be in the right, because there are so many of them: For all Men cannot have the Spirit, unless all Men speak the same thing. It is possible, that if they jointly afferted the fame thing, they might still be Deceivers; but if they are divided, they cannot be right: And therefore fince all those Men equally pretend to the Spirit, to prove very different and contradictory Affertions; they are in the right to declaim against the Use of Reason, which would question their Positions, and render them ridiculous.

There is a third fort of Men, who equally disclaim Authority on one side of the Question, Question, and Enthusiasm on the other; who offer to prove what they say; but upon pretence that they urge Scripture, desire that their Arguments may not be examined by Reason. That is, they will interpret it, but your Reason shall not be judge whether the interpretation be right or wrong.

For if you judge of that, they fay, you judge of their Argument, and so make Reafon Umpire in Questions of Faith. And thus the Sect will be infallibly continued, and Systems of Divinity rely upon a certain number of Propositions from Generation to Generation; and the Scholar, because he is to examine his Master's Doctrines, only by his Master's Arguments, shall never be wifer than his Master.

But to give a just Answer to these Reasons; let it be considered, that it is a weak and trisling Principle, which supposes Faith and Reason to be opposite. For indeed, Faith is one way by which our Reason is instructed, and acquires the proper Notices of Things. Our Reason apprehends Things three different ways: First by the Notices of Things abstracted, or first Principles, such as are congenite to the Understanding, as, that the whole is greater than its part. Secondly, by reasoning, or drawing Inserences from first Principles. And, Thirdly, by such Things as the Understanding assents

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to upon the Report, Teltimony, or Credit of others; that is, by Arguments extrinfical to the Nature of the Thing, or by collatefal or indirect Principles. In every Science our Reason gers its Notices all these ways. In natural Philosophy there are first Principles, Inferences drawn from them, and Propolitions to which we affent, upon the Authority of Plato and Aristotle. Thus it is in Theology. That God is good, that he is One, I know immediately; that nothing but Good is to be spoken of this good God, is an Inference I certainly draw from thence; but that the Afflictions fent upon us, are the Effects of his Goodne for, or that this one God is also three in Person; can be known only by Belief or Faith; that is, Reafon knows it only by Testimony, by indirect or collateral Proof. Now, even in this last Instance, it is easy to shew that Faith is so far from being contrary to Reason, that it is indeed the Effect of it, and is established by it. For thus Reason proceeds in the Enquiry: If I be told that God faid, there are Three and One in Heaven; I first ask, who faid it? And then I enquire whether he deferves Credit? If my Reason tells me he does ! I believe him, when he fays, God faid fo. So that here, Reason is the Ground of my Faith: And tho' I cannot directly prove this Object of my Faith; yet the Authority

thority upon which I believe, where I can prove That to be uncontestable, may very justly determine me. My Reason proceeds, and is determined in this Enquiry, just as it' is in any other; only that as it does not prove a geometrical Proposition by a moral Axiom; fo neither does it prove a Revelation by a natural Argument, but enters into one or the other, by Principles proper to the Nature of the Enquiry. Thus our Reason encourages our Assent to the greatest Mysteries of our Religion. Not that we can prove them by natural Reason; for to say That, were as abfurd as to fay, that we ought to prove them by Arithmetick, or Rules of Musick; but whosoever believes wifely, and not by chance, enters into his Faith under the Conduct of Reason; that is, he finds fufficient Cause and Reason to believe. Indeed, if we consider Faith as it is an Habit infused into the Mind by God, there is then fomething more included in it. For fo, Faith is a vital Principle, a Magazine of secret Truths, which we could never have difcovered by any Use of our natural Reason, but only by fuch Means as are wholly Supernatural and Divine.

And here lies the great difficulty of the Question; whether or no Faith in this sense, and materially taken, be contrary to our natural Reason; or whether any or all the Propo-

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Propositions of it, are to be interpreted and understood by this Reason materially taken? Or, are not our Reasons, which we justly follow in Physicks, Metaphysicks, or other Arts and Sciences, fometimes contrary to Faith? If they are, which shall we be determined by? Or can That in any fense be an Article of Faith, which is contrary to right Reason? To this I answer; right Reason; or humane Reason, is not the adequate Meafure of things Divine, or of Mysteries of Faith. Who can tell why the Devil, who is a wife intelligent Creature, should, for no other End but Mischief, tempt so many Souls to Ruin, when he knows it can be of no Advantage to him? Why should he engage in fo many things against God, whom he knows he cannot hurt? Whose Reason can account for God's Permission of Evil for good Ends, when he hates that Evil, and can bring about that Good without that Evil? Who can give any tolerable account; why God, who delighteth not in the Death of a Sinner, should not cause every Sinner to be faved; working in him a prevailing Grace, without which, in the Islue of Things, he shall not be faved; and yet this Grace wholly his own Production? Where is the wife Disputer of this World, that can explain the Possibility of God's fore-knowing tertainly what I shall do ten Years hence, when

when I am even then at liberty to do, or not do, the thing he is faid to foreknow? Well may we wonder that God should wash a Soul with Water, and with Bread and Wine nourish us up to Immortality; but who can fay why he should chuse such mean Instruments to effect fuch glorious Defigns? Who can give us the cause, why God should annex to great Rewards to fuch mean Services; and yet damn Men for Thoughts, for Words, for secret Wishes, which have had no guilty effect abroad, and, perhaps, were not defigned to have any? For if the Goodness of God be so overflowing in some cases, we, in Reason, could not expect there should be fo strong a Resolution to punish greatly for little Things. And who can give a fatiffactory Reason, why, for transient Acts of Sin in this Life, the World is to expect, in the other, never ceasing Torments to eternal Ages? These things the Scriptures teach us; but our Reason knows not why or how they are so; and therefore is not the adequate Measure of Mysteries, but must, in fome Cases, assent to what it cannot understand. When therefore, the Socinians argue against the Satisfaction of Christ, from the difficulty of conceiving, why God, in the Sufferings of his Son, should exact a Price of himself for his own Creature; Or why he, who loved us fo well, as to fend his own Son

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R is fu Son to die for us, should at the same time resolve to damn us, if his Son should not come and save us: They are highly to be condemned for so obstinate and pernicious an use of their Reason, not where she is not a competent Judge, but where she is not sufficiently instructed.

Reason is always a right Judge, when she is sufficiently informed; but in many things she sees nothing but the Face of the Article; which may indeed be plainly revealed, but without our seeing the Reason of it at all; or we see it, as in a Glass, darkly; and what we do see, is frequently the least part

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From hence it is plain, that we cannot safely argue thus, This is agreeable to right Reason, therefore it is so in Scripture, and in the Counsel of God. Not that one Reafon can be against another, when all things are equal and open; but that it is unfafe to determine thus, unless we are fully apprized of the State and Condition of those things about which we reason. Thus, we are not to lay, this is a wicked Man, because he is afflicted; or, his Cause is Evil, because it does not thrive. Tho' it be right Reason to fay that good Men ought to be happy and prosperous; yet no Reason can certainly conclude it should be so in this World, because both Faith and Reason tell us, it may E 2

be so in another. The result of this is, that we are not to suspect, or disbelieve every thing which is above our Understanding, nor admit any thing against Scripture, how reasonable soever it may seem to be, till all the Information be brought in, by which the

Judgment is to be made.

But the right Reason is not the positive and adequate Measure of any Article, yet it is the negative Measure of every one: So that whatfoever is a contradiction to right Reason, is not to be admitted as a Mystery of Faith: And this is certain upon an infinite account. For if a thing could be true and false at the same time, it would follow, that two Truths might be contrary to each other: for if the Affirmative be true, and the Negative true too; then the Affirmative would be both true and not true; which is a plain contradiction. If therefore any Proposition be said to be the Doctrine of Scripture, and yet is confessedly against right Reason; it cannot be the Doctrine of Scripture, because it cannot be true, and yet be against what is true.

And if it were otherwise; what could induce us to affert God's Justice, if we understood it not? And how can we know him to be Just, if we do not certainly know what are, and what are not, the Measures of Justice? And how can we know what

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Those are, if there be two Justices, one of which we do not know; and yet if it be another Justice, it must be of a different kind from that which we do know? They therefore who have supposed two Wills to be in God, a revealed and a secret Will, the one directly contrary to the other; lay the Mind of Man under an impossibility of receiving any Satisfaction in Enquiries about the Divine Justice. If That which appears to us to be just, is not so in God's Account, we we can never know what is just: And what a Delufion were it to exhort us to be meek like Christ; humble, as he is humble; pure, as God is pure; to be merciful as our beavenly Father is merciful; if the Ideas, the Reasons, and Measures of Purity, Mercy, Justice, and Meekness, were not just the same in the humane Mind, as in the Mind of God?

The Design of this Instance is to shew, that in all the Virtues there is a persect Unity. And because they are all originally and essentially in the God of Order, and from him derived to us; and all our Good, our Mercy, our Truth, our Justice, is but the having acted in Conformity to his; it necessarily sollows, that whatsoever is unjust in Men, must be really unjust, because it is a deviation from the eternal Pattern. In things of this kind indeed, we can judge E 3 with

with the greater certainty, because they are not at all mysterious; the moral Attributes of God being the strongest Ties of our Duty, and the surest Rule of our Conduct. Our Reason therefore being herein the most fully enlightened, cannot easily be misled; and we can more certainly tell what is right Reason in these things, than in others which do not so immediately relate to Duty and

Morality.

But farther; this Rule holds in every thing where Reason is, or can be right. For whatsoever right Reason says cannot be done, we cannot pretend from Scripture that it may be done by God's Omnipotence. He never employs his Almighty Power in performing things contradictory, nor can he fo employ it. It is no part of Power to do that which is not, cannot be, an effect of Power. Thus much is plainly intimated by the visible Endeavours of all the Sects of Christians, to clear their Articles from the imputation of their implying Contradictions; which is as much as to fay, that That cannot be true, to which any thing that is true, is contradictory. Some indeed find themfelves obliged, in defence of their Articles, to fay, that it is the defect of my Reason, by which I fee a contradiction in any of them; and that my Faith here will be the more excellent, the more I oppose my Reafon.

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fon. Thus in the Articles of the Ubiquity of Christ's Body, of Transubstantiation, and of absolute Reprobation; the Lutherans, the Papists, and Calvinists, resolve upon the Truth of them, the Heaven and Earth confute them.

I would not, by what I have here remarked, be understood to mean, that God can do nothing but what our Reason may comprehend and judge of. He can do every thing, but we cannot understand every thing. We are not to fay, or believe, that God can do, what right Reason says cannot be: But it must be believed, and confessed, that God can do those things, to which the utmost stretch of our Understandings, as they now are, cannot reach. Whatfoever is above our Understanding, is not therefore against it. I know God has the Power of working Miracles, but I do not understand the manner of his doing it; this is above my Understanding: But for a thing to be against my Understanding, it must first be against some Truth of God, of which I have a full and certain Knowledge and Perception.

But further; there are some things in Reason which are certainly true, and some things which Reason does infallibly judge of, and condemn. Our Saviour's Argument was certain; A Spirit bath not Flesh and Bones, as ye see me bave; therefore, I am no Spi-

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rit. And St. John's Argument was infallible, That which we have feen with our Eyes, and heard with our Ears, and our Hands have bandled of the Word of Life, that we preach; that is, we are to believe what we fee, and hear, and feel: And if an Angel from Heaven should tell us any thing against these Propositions, I do not doubt but we should disbelieve him. But, if it be asked, how we shall certainly know what Things are true, or false; I answer, that in the first place, we are to reckon among the Things we certainly know, first Principles, and Contradictions; and in the next place, fuch things as are manifestly abfurd. Therefore it is certain, that if the Parts of a Contradiction, or a right Reason, may be justly opposed to any Proposition; that Proposition must not be pretended to be an Article of Faith: And to fay that it may be fo in virtue of God's Omnipotence, is to oppose his me : But for arthing Power to his Truth.

The Result of this is, that our Reason is below many of the Works, and below all the Power of God; and therefore cannot perceive all that God hath done, or can, or will do. For this Reason, that which is impossible to Reason, may indeed be possible to Faith; but if any thing be really absurd and unreasonable, that is, against some Truth, in which the Mind is really and fully instructed:

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structed; that is a sufficient Presumption against the admitting such a Proposition as an Article of Faith. And in short, the endeayour to avoid what is unreasonable and abfurd, is the very Measure of interpreting very many places of Scripture. For why, otherwise, does not every Christian pluck out his right Eye, and cut off his right Hand, that he might enter into Heaven balt, and blind? Why do we not believe that Christ is a Vine, a Door, or a Stone, since these things are dogmatically afferted of him in the facred Writings? The Reason why we do not, is, that we expound the Scriptures, as we confute those who deny first Principles, by shewing that such Senses of it are not confistent with some other Truth, in which Reason is rightly instructed.

And here we may farther observe, that in all Questions of the Sense of Scripture, the ordinary way of finding it, is to be preferred to the extraordinary. It seems to be more rational to suppose, that God will bring us to himself by Methods which we may easily understand, and be easily determined by, than by working Miracles to no purpose, and without necessity. It is therefore a mighty Prejudice to the Romish Doctrine of the Eucharist, that it supposes the working daily and innumerable Miracles, to no purpose; since the real Body can be taken by them to

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whom it does no good; and all the good can be conveyed to us, tho' we take the Body only in a spiritual Sense; all the Good being conveyed to us by moral Instruments, and to a spiritual Effect. And therefore the Sense of the Church of England upon this Article, seems infinitely preserable, because it does no violence to Reason, nor the true intent of Miracles. A Man here may take the Holy Sacrament, discourse of its Mysteriousness, and Effects, without talking like a Mad-man, or seeming a Stranger to Reason

and Philosophy.

But after all, Reason, in its Determinations, must be managed with the greatest Caution. For every Man's Reason is not right, nor to be depended upon. As foolish absurd things are not, under the Pretence of being Mysteries, to be obtruded upon Mankind; fo neither must mistaken Philosophy, and uncertain Notices of Things, pass for Reason. There have been Mistakes on all Hands: Some Christians explain their Mysteries with fo much Art and Subtilty, affert fo many things of them which the Scriptures have not taught, and, without a competent Light from Heaven, determine upon those Things so positively; that the Article, which in its own fimplicity was indeed Mysterious, but might notwithstanding be believed; is by these Appendages, dangerously exposed and rendered rende haps, the D rious if it fubm being hand gainf

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nd ed rendered impossible to be understood, or, perhaps, assented to. Thus it hath fared with the Doctrines of the Incarnation, the mysterious Trinity, and the real Presence. But if it be hard to expect that Reason should submit to a salse Article, upon pretence it is being revealed; it will be as hard, on the other hand, to distrust an Article, because it is against a Proposition, which, for want of sufficient Light, I cannot be sure is true.

And now, from what has hitherto been observed, we may give an Answer to the Arguments, which were brought against the Use of Reason in Matters of Religion. And first, I say, that Reason may properly be said to be the Eye of the Soul, in all things natural, moral, and religious; and that Faith is the Light of that Eye, in things pertaining to God. It is indeed certain, that bare Reason, which St. Paul calls the natural Man, cannot discern the Things of God, or the Spirit; for they are spiritually discerned: But tho' natural Reason cannot, it is false to say, that Reason cannot. For Reafon inlightened can perceive the Things of God; that is, when Reason is instructed by that Master, and by those Rules, which are proper for spiritual Knowledge.

Humility and Piety, which have been urged as Arguments against the Use of Reason, are indeed the best Dispositions for the

due

due Use of it, in enquiring into the Myste. ries of the Gospel. For the humble Man may certainly understand better than the proud Man, who either will not laboriously enquire, or disdains to be informed. And tho' it may be urged as an Argument against the Use of Reason, that the Doctrine of the Cross was said to be foolishness to the Greeks; yet this is nothing to the purpole. For it was foolishness to them, only in that they had not been taught the Secrets of God; they were not informed that God would, in a way fo contrary to the Interests of Flesh and Blood, cause the Spirits of just

Men to be made perfect.

To the Argument from Scripture for the Obedience of the Understanding, and submitting our most imperious Faculties to God; it may be answered, that it is very true, that we are to fubmit our Understanding to God, but that is only when God speaks. Now because we did not hear him, but are only informed that God did fpeak; our Reason is to examine whether it be fit to believe them who tell us fo. For the' we ought, for the greatest Reasons, to submit to God; yet because some Men have spoken falsly, our Reason is to judge, and discern the Sayings of God, from the Pretences of Men: And how that can be done, without using our Reason in Matters of Religion, I must own I can-

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I cannot fee. The Obedience of the Understanding therefore, which is thus urged against the Use of Reason in these Cases, properly consists in This: That we submit it to God, wherever it appears reasonable to suppose he hath spoken; but never to Man, unless he has Authority from Reason or Religion. to demand it. That wherefoever Reason and Revelation feem to disagree, if we are fully persuaded that the Revelation is true, no other Pretence of Reason should induce us to disbelieve it. That in particular Enquiries, we make This the general Measure; never to do Violence to the Word of God, never to fuspect That; but modestly resolve rather to call our felves Liars, than maintain an Argument at the hazard of an Article; that is, when all things are equal, we chuse, for the Reverence due to the One, and the Posfibility of erring in the Other, to prefer the Pretences of Revelation, to those of Reafon.

As to the Objection drawn from the Fallibility of reasoning, and its being subject to Error and Illusion; I confess the Charge; but at the same time observe, that the Pretences to Revelation commonly lie under the same Disadvantages. But if, to preclude all Reasoning in Religion, it should be said, that God hath said it, therefore it is true; this, indeed, would be the best Reason in This only. But because even this Reason can be of no use to us till the minor Proposition be proved, till it be certain that God hath said it; even this must depend upon the Use of our Reason.

It has been objected farther, that by weak Reasonings Men may lose their Religion; but this ought not to conclude against right Reasoning. As if one should say, that because Men are undone by Quacks, therefore regular Phylitians are of no Use. We are not to measure every thing in Religion by our weak Reasonings: But whatsoever is certain in Reason, Religion cannot set aside That; but That which is uncertain or imperfect in Reason, Religion does often determine and amend. The Mysteries of Religion may indeed feem equally abfurd to Reason prejudiced with ill Manners, or mis-led by false Propositions: But that which seems impossible to vitious Persons, is Reason to good Men. 'Tis not the Reason of the Pretenders to Atheism, but the Abuse of it, that makes them fuch: Had they more Knowledge, or did they imagine they had less than they really have, they had never run into Atheism.

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## RULE IV.

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A Judgment of Nature, or Inclination, is not sufficient to make a sure Conscience.

This Rule will be of good use, to let us into the Knowledge of our Condition, as to the Nature of many Actions which we call Moral, but which do not always merit that Character. Now, in these Actions, we may confider, there are three Degrees of practical Judgment. The first is called an Inclination, or a natural Fitness between the Disposition of a Man, and some certain Actions. All Men are naturally pitiful in some degree or other; and therefore, there is a natural Conveniency between this Disposition, and an Act of Charity. Secondly, in fweeter and better Natures, there is a virtual Charity, which is somewhat more than the bare Disposition to it. But, thirdly, in those only who confider, and chuse, and act in Consequence of the Commandment, or of right Reason, is found the formal practical Judgment.

Now, the first of these, the natural Inclination, is but a remote Disposition towards a right Conscience, and a practical Judgment; because it may be diverted and made inessectual by a thousand Accidents.

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We naturally Pity a Man in Misery or Distress: but there are infinite Accidents and Reasons, such as they are, which will hinder our relieving him. As to the fecond, the virtual Judgment, or natural Inclination, exerted in the Habit or Acts of some Virtues; it certainly makes a nearer approach to real Virtue, than the former. Some Men are naturally merciful, fome abstemious, and fome continent. By fome accidental Motives, the Disposition gathers Strength, and the Nature is confirmed; but after all, it is but Nature still. The Man may be Chast, either because he is shock'd at that Immodefty, which is the incentive to Impurity; or he loves his Quiet, and dreads the Confequences of his Crime. And besides, as Men at first fight fall in Love, against their Reason, against their Interest, and cannot help it; fo they may naturally delight in the Practice of some Virtues: But as, in the first Cafe, they are rather miserable than vitious; fo in the other, they are rather fortunate than virtuous. Virtue, in this Sense, derives upon the owner of it no other Glory than the having a fair Face, a fine Voice, or a good Constitution, would give him. It is nothing but Nature improved and confirmed by Accident; or it is fuch a state of Good, which cannot recommend a Man to the Fayour of God. It is not a fufficient Principle

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Principle of a good Life, nor indeed of the Actions of its own kind. Nor of a good Life; because it may be shewn in a single instance, and can never be in all: Nor of the Actions of its own kind, because this natural Strength is nothing but an unaptues to suffer by common Temptations; but place the Man in view of stronger Temptations, and this Disposition supports him not, because there may be something in Nature which may overbear it.

To the Constitution therefore of a right and sure Conscience, there must be a formal fudgment, that is, a deliberation of the Understanding, and choice of the Will, That being instructed, and This inclined by the Grace of God. Then it is right and good, not when it is necessary or natural, but when it is thus chosen. So that it is not enough that Conscience be taught by Nature; but it must be taught by God, conducted by Reason, and instructed by Laws and sober Principles.

## RULE V.

When two Motives concur to the determination of an Action, whereof one is Virtuous and the other Secular, a right Conscience is not prejudiced by that Mixture,

He who fasts to punish kimself for his Sins, and at the same time intends his Health;

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tho' he should not be able to say which was the Motive that determined him to the Action, yet it does no hurt to his Conscience. The religious View of it felf being sufficient to make it the Act of a good Conscience. If the taking in the other as a Motive, could prejudice the Conscience, it could not be lawful to be perfuaded to it by the Promifes of those temporal Bleffings recorded in both Testaments, and to which there is a natural and invincible Defire. Indeed if the worldly Inducement be the stronger; it is, so far as it prevails over the religious Motive, a diminution of the worthiness of the Action: Yet if it be a worldly Bleffing under a promife, it does not alter the whole kind of the Action. But if the temporal Motive be not under a Promise, and yet is the first and chief Motive; the whole Cale is altered: The Conscience is not right, it is guided by Inclination or Interest, and not by Duty. He who is charitable that he may please a good Prince; tho' his Defign be innocent, yet because it is an End which God harh not encouraged, by propounding it as a Reward of Charity; the whole deliberation is properly Worldly or Secular. There is but one Exception to these Remarks, and that is where the worldly Motive is so purely natural, that it is also necessary; and the Reanot, and at the lame time intends his Health;

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Duty, and tacitly under a Promise.

From this Rule naturally arises a very material Question; which is, that fince all who enter into the holy Offices of the Ministry, are so entirely to design the Glory of God, that any other Considerations should scarce be admitted into the Resolution; is this to be understood rigorously? Or if not, how

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I answer; wherever a religious Act, by God's Appointment, may ferve both a temporal and spiritual End; it is lawful to have either of them in view: But that our Behaviour is more regular and commendable, if we serve the more excellent End with the greater Zeal. So that, tho' it be better to enter upon the facred Office wholly for fpiritual Ends, yet it is not unlawful to enter upon it with an actual Design, to make that Calling the Means of our natural and neteffary Support. For it is lawful to intend what God has offered and propounded. The End which God hath defigned cannot be Evil; and therefore it cannot be Evil to lay hold on that Instrument to That End, which by God's own Appointment is to serve That End. Now fince God bath ordained, that they who preach the Gospel, should live of the Gospel, it cannot be unlawful to intend That in order to This. And the' Support

and Maintenance be our first and immediate Defign, yet the Undertaking is not thereby rendered wholly unlawful. For all Callings, all Professions, are to be directed to the Glory of God: Whether we eat or drink, or what soever we do; we are to do all to the Glory of God: And if one Profession tends more immediately to God's Glory than another; this Difference arises only from the different Nature of the Professions. Man thinks it unlawful to bring up his Son to the most gainful Trade; if he has Reason to believe that his Son will exercise it, as he ought, to the Glory of God. It is indeed a vast Imperfection to have nothing in view, but the temporal Advantages which God hath annexed to the Priesthood: But, I fay, it is not always a Sin to make Them the first Reason for designing a Man to that Profession.

This Design, indeed, is justifiable only in those Persons, who, at a great distance, intend to be of this Profession; who first study to make themselves capable of it, and to be Masters of those Abilities which are necessary to the Conduct of it. For such Persons may, so it be lawful, first design to serve the End that stands next them; and yet afterwards carry on their Views to the execution of the Office in its utmost Extent and Capacity. He indeed who does actually en-

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ter into holy Orders, is obliged to take care, that his principal End be the Glory of God, and the Good of Mens Souls: For these Reafons.

Because no Man can be fit for that Office, but he who is spiritual in his Person, as well as in his Profession. He must be a Contemner of the World, a Light to others, an Example to his Flock, one who minds heavenly Things, and whose Conversation is in Such Characters as these are wholly inconfistent with a Man's placing his chief Affections on the Things of the World. The Design of the Priesthood being calculated for the Good of Mens Souls, and the Glory of God, cannot be purfued as the Nature of the Design requires, if any thing neceffary to the Advancement of it, be omit-Thus the Ministers of Religion may intend their Health, may be concerned for their necessary Support, and may, by just and equitable Methods, extricate themselves from any Difficulties or Impediments, which may obstruct the regular Discharge of their Duty: But the Glory of God, and Good of Mankind, must be habitually, principally, and constantly in the Heart, and in the Purpole of every fuch Action.

Now we may know when the Design is thus regulated, by the following Rules. No Man can principally, that is, as he ought,

design the Good of Souls, who enters upon the facred Ministry, without those Measures of Preparation and Disposition which the Church, and the Nature of the Thing it self requires; that is, unless he be well instructed in the Holy Scriptures, and be fit to teach, to exhort, and to reprove. Nor can that Man's Intentions be right, who by any indirect Arts, gets himself admitted into holy Orders. He who enters Simoniacally, feems to fix his Heart intirely upon a worldly Emolument: Nor can he be capable of filling fo facred, fo important a Post, whose fole Recommendation to it, was his Money. On the other hand; he may be faid principally to intend the Good of Souls, and the Glory of God, who executes his Office in fuch a manner as is requifite to produce those Effects. For he thereby plainly shews the Conformity of his Intentions to the Will of God. But we are to understand this under the following Caution: He only may be confident, that his Intentions for God's Glory, and the Good of Souls, are regularly exerted; who, in the Conduct of them, always makes the less noble Views give place to those which are more important; that is, who still faithfully pursues the Work of the Ministry, tho' the hopes of Maintenance, Honour, or fecular Regards, are loft.

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For, if ever the Minister of holy Things, for Hope or Fear, for Gain or Interest, desert his Station; it may justly be presumed, that his Heart was not right with God, who, for any humane Regards, will quit his Service. For, if without a divine Commission, it be not lawful to undertake the holy Calling; to give it up without a divine Permission, must, I think, be very criminal. Where the Need is lasting, the Office, which is to supply it, is perpetual. So that to leave the Calling when the Revenue is gone, to desert the Altar when it hath no Offering; is to despise the Religion, and to love only the Fat of the Sacrifices.

But we are not hereby to suppose, that those Ecclesiasticks, who in Times of Difficulty, or Persecution, without omitting any necessary part of their Office, take from it fuch Portions of Time as are necessary to support them by some honest Imployment: We are not to imagine, I fay, that these Men are guilty of the Irregularities above-mention'd; for St. Paul was a Tent maker, because he would not be burthensome to the Church of Corinth. Nor are we to fay, that it is criminal for Ecclesiasticks in time of Peace, or War, to change their Station from one Bishoprick or Church to another, where God, or the Church; Charity, or Necessity; Prudence, or Obedience, calls them.

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Indeed,

Indeed, it hath been strongly afferted by fome, that Ecclefiafticks, upon no Pretence whatfoever, ought to leave one Church for another, any more than a Man should leave one Wife for another: And for this they commonly urge a Decretal of Pope Evarifius, Can. 7. 2. 1. and the Case of Ensebius, who refused to leave the Church of Casarea for that of Antioch; and the Authority of St. 7erom, in his Epistle to Oceanus. But that the Authorities here produced do not affect the present Case, will appear from these Reasons. It is certain, that Evarifius forbad removes from Church to Church, Ambitus Caufa, only when Ambition or Covetouiness are the Motives to a Remove: Which implies, that he does not condemn fuch Translations, as are made upon Motives confessedly innocent. As to Eusebius, it is to be suspected, that he imposed upon the good Emperor, who knew not the fecret Reason why he refused to leave the Church of Cafarea for that of Antioch. He had before engaged the Emperor in his Interest, for procuring him that Bishoprick; and was unwilling to appear to him as a Man of Levity, and defirous of Change. But this was not all: He was a fecret Friend to the Arian Caule; and therefore thought it impolitick to remove to that Church, where Euftathius had just before gloriously distinguished himself in opposing

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jury It upot Chu tain mor ligio felf, of a Rea ent mitt God terw troci char first And amb and Use In : obli who opposing that Heresy. As to the Remark St. Jerom takes from the Council of Nice; it concludes against those only who did it without Authority, upon their own Head, for their own evil Purposes, and with In-

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It is plain then, that an Ecclefialtick may, upon a reasonable Motive, remove from one Church to another; and the Morive is certainly reasonable, if by removing he can do more Good, or be of greater Service to Religion; but of this he is not to judge himfelf, but his Superiors who have the Power of appointing the Change. It was for these Reasons, that the Translations of the ancient Bishops and Clergy were generally permitted and approved. Origen first served God in the Church of Alexandria, and afterwards in the Churches of Cafarea, Antioch, and Tyre. St. Gregory Nazianzen changed his See eight times. St. Peter was first Bishop of Antioch, and then of Rome. And St. Paul being himself obliged to an ambulatory Episcopacy, removed Timothy and Titus from Church to Church, as the Ules and Exigencies of the Church required. In short, if every Man were indispensably obliged to remain in the Place and Capacity whereto he was first appointed; then it were unlawful for a Priest to desire the good Work of a Bishop, the' the Apostle expressly recommends

commends that Desire, which necessarily

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The only Difficulty which remains to be cleared up in this Rule, is, I think, this: how we shall be able to discover clearly the Secrets of our Intentions, and the true Caufes of our Actions? Now in order to the judging of the Integrity of our Intentions, let it be observed; that when the Mind is already actually determined, tho' a new Motive may accidentally strike upon it; and so give a new Strength to the Resolution; yet it is not to be considered as the prevailing Ingredient. It only gives fresh vigour to a determination that was made before. In a case of Arbitration between two Persons who are equally beloved by the honest Arbitrator, he refolves, the with some Reluctance, to right the injured Party: And the Applause which his honest Design procures from other Men, doth not make his Resolution, but only encourages it, by abating his Reluctance.

determination, and wants some Weight to finish it; that which supervenes and sinks the Scale, is not the prevailing Ingredient, but only that which during the deliberation, helped it forward. For That is properly the prevailing Ingredient in the Determination, which is most valued, not That which pleases most: Not That which our Senses, but That

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which our Reason recommends. Thus he who holds a Festival in Gratitude and spiritual Joy to do God Glory; and in Preparation to the Action, finds a vast Pleasure in considering the Musick, the Company, and Festivity of the Day; who, in his Fancy, exults at This, but has his Resolution sirst encouraged by That; hath not ruined the Regularity of his Conscience, by this mixture of sensual and spiritual Motives.

Then it is that the good and pious Ingredient is over-powered by a worldly One, when an Instrument toward the End, is proportioned rather to This, than to the Other. Thus he who industriously publishes his Acts of Charity and Beneficence, who is fond of the Applause of Men, and if he has it not in fuch Abundance as he defires, is unhappy, and complains of Man's Ingratitude; fuch a Man, in the most humane Action he performs, feems to consider his Fame rather than his Piety, and would never have exerted the One, but in Prospect of the Other. In short, every Determination of the Mind is criminal, if any one unlawful Motive contributed to the making of it. He therefore that serves under his Prince in a just War, with a view of gratifying a private Revenge, upon a Person engaged in the adverse Party; loses the Merit of his Obedience, and serves aid ther andy becan to they cost him nothing: his Prince only for the Pleasure of an hellish Revenge . Seltival in Gratifude . Sensys

There are some other things to be faid concerning the Conduct of our Intentions. which, because they do not immediately relate to the chief Delign of this Rule, are to be considered under their own Head.

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An Argument not Sufficient nor competent, tho' it do persuade us to a thing in it felf good, is not the Ground of a right, nor a sufficient Warrant for a fure Conscihus heaven indulations of Charity and Beaches 100,

He who frequents the publick Prayers of the Church, because it is the Custom, or takes the Sacrament to avoid Cenfure : does an Act in it felf good, but the Motive is by no means fufficient to make the Action religious, or to flew that the Conscience is right and fure. For it is certain that every Determination ought to be made upon Motives of its own kind; that is, we are to be determined to an Action of Religion, by a religious Reason, and to Civil Actions by prudential Reasons. If it were not so, we could not well prove the Folly and Inconsistency of that Man's Behaviour, who should wear Clothes only because they cost him nothing; Argu our 1 fuffic learn of hi Mer conf by p of a to b men then to E ror I hend

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Under this Rule, it may be proper to enquire, whether it be lawful to perfuade a Man to the belief of a true Proposition, by Arguments wherewith we are not perfuaded our felves, and which we do not take to be fufficient? The Cale is this: Girolami, a learned Priest of Ferrara, finds, that many of his Flock, by converfing with the Jewish Merchants, are infected with Judailm: He confiders, that his Parishioners are led away by popular Arguments, and are not capable of any other. Their Recovery therefore is to be expected only by that kind of Arguments, which at first led them aftray. But then he confiders, that if they were led into Error, by Error; it is not fit that by Erfor they should be led back into Truth. And hence he goes on to observe, that That Argument which he can answer, certainly cannot conclude in the Question; for if it may be answered, it is at best but the here of a Reason: And therefore, he who knows this, either must not use that kind of Persuasion, or if he does, he must first refolve to abuse the Man's Understanding, before he can fet it right. And this he takes to be inconfistent with the Honour of Truth. and the Charity, the Simplicity, the Ingenuity of a Christian to discoul out not To

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To this I answer: That it is indeed utterly unlawful to tell a Lie for God, or for Truth. God will not be ferved by That which he hates; nor are there fuch Defects in Truth as to need the fupport of Falshood and Imposture. Therefore Girolami, in order to reclaim his Flock, could not lawfully fright them with a Tale of a Vision, or pretend a Tradition which he knew to be untrue, or falfify a Record. These Arts are confessedly base. But then, on the other hand, it is certainly lawful for me to use an Argument, which I believe is true, tho' I am not sure it is true. For a real Truth, and a supposed Truth, are all one, as to the Innocency of my Defigns. And he who knows how little certainty there is in humane Reasonings, and that we only know in part, and prophesy in part, and that in those Things whereof we know a little, we are ignorant of much more; must either be content with fuch Proportions of Knowledge as the Things will afford, and himself can get; or else he must never endeavour to bring any Man over to his Opinion. If therefore a Man, suppose his Arguments to be just, and proper to perfuade; tho' they are neither proper, nor fufficient for his purpose, yet he may lawfully use them. For, in this Case, tho' himself be deceived, yet because it is upon the strength of those Arguments 7-

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he relies, he cannot be obliged to use any better than he has, any more, than to use fuch as he knows to be falle and inconclufive. And farther; in persuading another Man of a Truth, it is lawful to use such Arguments, as derive their whole Strength from the Weakness of him whom I am persuading: And the Reasons are these: Because ignorant Persons are not capable of such Arguments as may demonstrate the Question; and because That which will demonstrate a Truth to one Person, may not at all move another; The generality of Men are much more easily wrought upon by Artifice, than by direct Argument. They who were prejudiced against our Blessed Saviour because he was of Galilee, needed no other Argument to make them believe in him, than the confuting that foolish Proverb, out of Galilee cometh no Good: Yet this would not be a sufficient and rational Proof of our Saviour's being the Messiah. The Passions, the Imagination, and the Will, have frequently a mighty Force in hindering our Affent to a Truth; when therefore we persuade Men thus influenced, it is lawful to apply to their Passions, when we fee it is to no purpose to apply to their Reasons. When St. Paul would persuade the Jews from laying violent Hands upon him; he was not to attempt it by offering to demonstrate that he did well in going to scribegious; the

the Gentiles, fince God had rejected all the Jews, but a Remnant only: But he perfuaded them by faying, that he did nothing against the Law of Moses and the Temple. Thus the Holy Spirit of God himself applies this kind of reasoning to the weakness of Men; for he fays, by the Mouth of St. Paul, if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your Faith also is vain. The Corint bians disavowing the Consequent, were obliged to admit the Antecedent; tho' to other Men this had been no strict Proof of Christ's Refurrection. And in short, thoufands of Men would never be drawn from their Errors, if it were not lawful to use Ara guments, rather proportioned to their Understanding, than to the Nature of the Question. So that we may very innocently perfuade weak Men after this manner, provided we take this Caution along with us; that if we are asked feriously, whether we think the Argument conclusive; we do not fay it is, when we know it is not; and that whenever we perfuade, we make use of no Argument which we are fure is false.

Now, here arises another Question; which is, whether it be lawful for Preachers, in order to a good End, to fright Men with panick Terrors, or to create Fears which have no Ground; as to tell them, if they lie, their Faces will be deformed? If sa-

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trilegious, they shall have the Lepros? of the like. Ianswer; there are Terrors enough mention'd in the New Testament, to affright that Man from his Sins, who can be wrought upon by Fear. For I am sure there cannot be a more formidable Evil than Hell, nor any Terrors more shocking, than those which are to be the Portion of the damned.

But to answer more directly to the Question; I think the following Rules ought to be the Measure of our Behaviour in this Point. A Preacher may deter Men from Sin, by threatning them with any thing which may probably happen. For since the Curses of this Life and the other, are indefinitely denounced against all Sinners, as Want, to the detainers of Tythes; a wandring Fortune to Church Robbers: It is not unreasonable to use such Threats, as are most likely to influence the Consciences of wicked Men.

Not is it unlawful to affright Men in threatning any thing that may possibly happen in the ordinary Effects of Providence; for every Sin is against an infinite God, who can produce what Evil he pleases. But then, we are to take care that the Threat we denounce, does not suppose a Miracle necessary to effect it. We may threaten a Sinner in England with Diseases and Temporal Death, if he prophanes the Sacrament; but

we are not to fay, that if he does it, a Tyger shall meet him in the Church-yard and destroy him. The Improbability here, were fo plain, that the Threat would only be ridiculous. Nor must we be too positive and determinate in our Demuntiations, but should rather cautiously apply them, and in a general Sense; as, it is likely such an Evil may happen, or, we have no Security against it, and the like: Otherwise, we shall render our felves, as well as the Threat, contemptible. So that, under this Restriction, we need not doubt to press upon the Minds of wicked Men, any Instances of Terror and Punishment threatned to Sin in the Gospel, or to fet them out in the utmost Circumstances of Horror. Thus our blessed Lord, when he threatens with the Punishment of Hell, describes the Greatness of it by such Things, as we think the most terrible to our Natures; as Brimstone and Fire, the Worm that never dies, weeping and wailing, and gnashing of Teeth.

We may likewise, under the same Caution, endeavour to fright Men from their Sins, by an instance of Terror, which shall never have happened more than once. Thus, tho' the particular Punishment of Corah, Dathan, and Abiram, has never been repeated upon the Rebellion and sacrilegious Attempts of other Men; yet as God's Power, and his

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But, if it is lawful at any time to make use of Bugbears, or vain Terrors, to bring Men to their Duty; it is only where we find the Minds of those we would perfuade, extreamly weak and childish: Nor can it be lawful bere, unless This will make it fo; that the Minds of those Men are incapable of being moved, but by those things which strongly affect their Imagination.

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A Conscience determined by the Counsel of wife Men, even against its own Inclinations, may be sure and right.

For in many Cases, the Opinion and Advice of wife Men is the best Argument, If the Conscience was first influenced by a weaker Reason; every Change to a better, is a Degree of Certainty. But this Rule is practicable only in those Cases, where the Conscience observes the Weakness of its first Reason, or justly suspects it, and sees not so much Cause to distrust the Opinion of wifer Men. How it is farther to be reduced to

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Practice, will be more properly considered in the third Chapter.

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He that Sins against a right and sure Conscience, whatever the Instance be, commits a great Sin, but not a double one.

This Man's Sin is indeed the greater, because it is less excusable, and more bold. For, the more Light there is in the Understanding, the more Malice there is in an irregular Will. If I had not come to them, fays our Saviour, they had not had Sin; but now they have no Cloak for their Sin. But it does not follow from hence, that it is an Aggravation of the Nature of Sin, to fay, it was done against our Conscience: For in Fact, all Sins are so in some respect or other; otherwise they would not be Sins. All that we are to conclude from hence, is, that the more fure and confident the Conscience is, the Sin receives the greater Degree. So that we cannot here infer a distinct kind of Sin. For the Conscience, which hath no Law of its own, obliges us only, in Confequence of the Commandment of God.

But then it may be asked, what shall a Judge do who knows that the Witnesses in a criminal

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criminal Cause, have given in a false Oath? The Case is this; Canopus, a Spartan Judge, walking by the Gardens of Oneficritus, lees him murdering his Slave; who, to skreen himself from Justice, accuses another of his Servants, and compels fome to fwear to the Truth of the Accufation. The Judge knows the whole Process to be unjust, but knows not how to behave, because he is sensible of the Obligation he is under to judge according to Allegation and Proof; and yet to do Justice and Judgment, which in this Case is impossible. He therefore enquires, which way he ought to determine himself, fince he transgresses the Laws of Sparta, if he acquits one legally convicted; and yet if he condemns him whom he knows to be innocent, he fins against God, and Nature, and his own Conscience.

That a Judge not only may, but is obliged to behave according to the Process of the Law, and not his own private Conscience; has been strongly afferted by several great Lawyers and learned Men; and the Reasons they go upon are these. r. They say, that a Judge is to be considered in a double Capacity, a publick, and a private. In his private Capacity, as he is a Man only, he must proceed upon the private Notices and Persuasions of his Conscience: But in his publick Capacity, as a Judge, he is to re-

ceive Information by Witnesses, and other Usages of Law, because he is obliged upon Oath to proceed according to Them: He is not to make his private Conscience the publick Measure; and if there be any fault in the Process, it is rather to be charged upon the Law, than upon the Judge. 2. So in putting the Sentence in Execution, the Executioner is not to refuse his Office, tho' he should know, that the Judge has condemned an Innocent; for fo, he would not be his Judge's Judge only, but also of the publick Interest. 3. If this were permitted, the whole Order and Frame of Judicatures would be inverted and confused. 4. We should hereby allow too much to the Persuasions of confident and opiniative Men, who easily imagine their own Opinions only, sufficient to determine against the Sentence of the Law. 5. And, in Fact, we find a quite different Procedure, not only in Civil, but also in Ecclesiastical Courts. Thus a Priest may not refuse to admit him to Communion, whom he knows to have been unjustly absolved. For it would fubvert all Order in the World, if That which is just in publick, should be relainded upon any private Pretence; and if That were to be overborn by This, it would throw all things into Confusion. 6. The Judge therefore is to lay aside the Affections of the Man, when he fits in Judgment; and,

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and, instead of his own Reason, is to be guided by the Reason of the Law. 7. Nor will the Pretence of Zeal for Truth and Righteousness, justify a contrary Behaviours Because, in Judicatures, legal, or seeming Truth, is all that can be fecured; and with this the Law is latisfied. So that we are fure we may proceed upon the Testimony of concurring Witnesses, because They speak legal Truth, which is a perfect Rule for the Confcience of a Judge. According to the Words quoted by our Saviour from the Mosaic Law, it is written in your Law, the Testimony of two Men is true; that is, we are to take it as if it were true, and must proceed accordingly. 8. And thus much must be confessed to be true in some parallel Cales: For a Judge may not proceed upon the Evidence of an Instrument which he hath privately looked over, if it be not produced in Court; even tho' by that means he should be able to do Justice to an oppressed Person: For the Laws do not permit a Judge to act upon any private Information, lest an Inlet should be opened to all manner of Violence and Injustice. And, in thort, fince no Man is suffered to judge by his own private Authority, so neither must any Man judge by his own private Knowledge. And to what End shall he call in Witnesses for giving him publick Information, if after they have done fo,

he, by his private Information, shall be al-

lowed to proceed against it?

But if, after all, it should be asked, what then will become of the Judge as a Man; and what of his private Conscience? These Men answer; that the Judge must use all the honest Artifice and Cunning he can, to administer Justice, and save the Innocent: He may, as Daniel did in the Case of Susanna, entrap the salse Witnesses; but if he can find no way to relieve the injured Man without prostituting the Character, and laying aside the Duty of a Judge; he must, as a Person of a publick Character, do Justice according to Law.

These are the best and most plausible Reasons that can be urged in Desence of this Opinion. But I shall give my Reasons why they do not appear satisfactory to me. Therefore to the Question I answer.

That a Judge, in this Case, may not do any publick Act against his private Conscience; he may not condemn a Person whom he knows to be innocent, tho' he be proved guilty by false Witnesses. And my Reasons are these.

To flay an innocent Person, is absolutely and indispensably criminal. Thou shalt not slay the just and innocent, said God. From whence I thus argue; that which is in its own Nature essentially Evil, ought not to be

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be done for any Reason, or Pretence whatfoever. Since therefore in the prefent Cafe, the Man is supposed to be innocent, he ought not to be put to Death by any Authority, or for any End we can possibly imagine Now in all Cases, where Men suffer Death. they are supposed to suffer, either because they deserve to suffer, or for some publick End. The first Reason is not supposed in this Question; and if the latter be urged, it is a plain Profession that we may do Evil that Good may come of it. This Confequence, fay some, will not hold, unless you can prove that in Law he appears innocent; but I think it does hold, if he appears innocent to the Judge only, and yet the Judge shall be by Law indispensably obliged to punish him. The Law indeed may condemn him, but the cannot innocently do it by that Judge. balas .. winorita A saraud ho

Processes of Law, is only an human Right or Constitution; for the Law may oblige a Judge to proceed according to his own Knowledge, if she will rely upon him and his Knowledge: But not to condemn the Innocent, is a Divine and Eternal Right, and cannot be set aside by That which is wholly humane. And indeed, the only Reason that can be assigned for a Judge's proceeding upon the Forms and Processes of Law, in receiving

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Testimonies and judicial Proofs, is This: that he is supposed not to know the Matters brought before him, till they appear in the Forms of Law; whereas, in the Question before us, he is supposed to have known them

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If a King, or Senate, receive Acculations against any of their Council, whom they know to be innocent; they may not deliver him up to Death; because They being accountable to none but God, are to judge by his Measures, which are to preserve the innocent; and not by Those, which the Necessities, the Weakness, the Impersections of Man, have made highly convenient. But, if private Judges are not allowed to do fo; it is because they are obliged by their Princes to proceed by Forms: Which shews the Neceffity of fuch Proceedings to be founded folely on humane Authority. And therefore, tho' the Law may oblige them to act in this manner; yet as to our Enquiry here, felating to what they are obliged to do in Point of Conscience; it is certain the Law cannot supersede the Conscience, there being supposed in this Case, a Knowledge of the Fact, joined with a Command of God for the Right. long a none and Tye office set

The Evils that may follow upon a too firict Adherence to the Forms and Proofs of Law, against the Judge's Conscience, may be much

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much more fatal, than those which would arise upon his adhering to a Truth which he certainly knew. There is no Man who apprehends he shall be undone by false Wirnesses, but will grant that himself is by all means to be preferved. Who will not condemn Pilate, who, upon the Testimony of false Accusers, and against his own Conscience, delivered up to Death the most Holy Jesus? But supposing his Accusers had made good every Charge against him in Point of Law, and could have legally proved foul Things against the unspotted Lamb of God; if Pilate, at the same time, had known his Innocence; could the Water in the Bason have washed him clean, after he had meanly, and against his Conscience, yielded to the Defires of those perjured Men, and condemned him who was purer than the Angels?

Besides, all Laws proceeding in the best manner they can, in their Enquiries after Truth, would never disable a Judge from making a due Use of it when he hath sound it out, and prevented the search of the Law, by an happy Discovery of his own. For the examining of Witnesses being but a means to find out the Truth, we are in search of; cannot surely be preserved to the End for which the Examination it self was designed. If therefore no Law ever was, or indeed can

be so unreasonable as to decree, that in such a Case the Judge, instead of directly relieving the Innocent, shall proceed to his Condemnation; it follows that he is under no Obligation to do it, and therefore the Obligation of his Conscience is, upon no Pretence, to be set aside.

In fhort, Laws being intended for the Good of Men, are not only to comply with common and ordinary Cases, by ordinary Provisions; but also with their accidental Occafions, by fuch Provisions as are extraordinary. And thus we find that the Laws give way, when they are found injurious in fpecial Cases. And this is the Ground of all Chancery; because it has been sometimes found a true Observation, summum Jus, summa Injuria. 'Tis the Advice of Solomon, be not over righteous; and the Justice of God being always tempered with Gentleness and Favour, Equity and Mercy; our Justice will certainly then be best, when we form it upon the Justice of the greatest and best Being.

And now, there will be the less need of a Reply to the Pretences on the other side, if we consider that they only prove, that a Judge is obliged to observe the Forms of judicial Process, and to proceed according to Allegation and Proof, ordinarily and regularly; as supposing This to be the best or-

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dinary way of Information, as most certainly it is. But as the Law, tho' it uses the best means of Information it can get, yet would not refuse the Testimony of a Prophet sent from Heaven, or of a Mirasle which should be wrought to establish the Truth; so neither will it refuse any better way that can be offered. But whatever the Law would do, yet, our present Enquiry relating to the Judge, it is certain, that the Judge, in the Case now before us, hath a surer way of Evidence. And therefore, as the Law, if it had a surer way of Evidence, ought not to act in opposition to so clear a Light; so neither can the Judge.

However, I shall now say something to the Particulars which have been brought to justify the other side of the Question.

1. It is true, that in one Sense the Judge hath a double Capacity, and that in each Capacity he is obliged to different Offices. Some Things he is obliged to do as a Man, and some as a Judge: That is, some Obligations are natural and essential to him, and some are only super-induced upon his Office. The Duties indeed in this Case are sometimes disparate, but never contrary to each other; and whenever there is a contrariety betwixt them, the Duties which are super-induced, are always to give way to Those which are natural. For whatsoever would be his Duty

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as Man, the Judge may not refuse to do. It is the Man that is the Judge; in the Man that Office is placed; and the Duty of a Judge is laid upon him by the Conscience of the Man. 2. That an Executioner may not refuse to do his Office, tho' the Judge have pass'd an unjust Sentence, is only thus far true; when the Matter is dubious, unknown, or intolerable. For if a Judge should order a Hangman to flay alive a Prophet fent from God, to crucity Jesus Christ, or to stab his King; I doubt not but the Adverfaries themselves will own, he is not obliged 3. And whereas it is urged, that to admit of private Knowledge against publick Evidence, were to dissolve all the Forms of Judicature, and open a way to many Evils; I answer, that the Law therefore refuses the Judge's Testimony, because she hath That which she presumes is better, and because she not knowing the secret, follows the best way she hath. But the Judge knows the fecret, he is not deceived, nor doth he make Pretences, for the Cafe supposes him to speak according to his Conscience; and therefore tho' the Law, for some prudential Reasons, does not believe him, yet he is forced to believe himself; and therefore in Duty to God, must act in Consequence of that Evidence, or he must not act at all. 4. As to the Inconveniences that might arise from

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from allowing too much to a confident or opinionative Judge; I grant, he may not prefer his private Opinion to the Sentence of the Law, because it may be, and indeed must be uncertain, as it is an Opinion: But yet I cannot doubt, but if a Judge's Conscience were effectively determined against a Law, and he really took it to be unjust and unlawful, he ought to follow his Conscience. For if a Judge think the Law to be unjust, he makes himself a partner in the Injustice, in acting by an unjust Law against his Conscience. Not he only who commands Evil to be done, is guilty; but he likewise who obeys fuch a Command. 5. The Instance of a Prieft, and an Excommunicate unduly abfolved, will by no means clear up this Question. For there is a wide difference between condemning the Innocent, and acquitting the Guilty. The Law hath Power to forgive the Criminal, but not to punish the Guiltless. And therefore, if a Man be absolved when he deferved it not; we may suppose him pardoned, and the private Priest is not his Judge in that Cafe. For to excommunicate, and absolve, are Acts of the same publick Power, and are authorized by publick Sentence, and not by the private Minister; fince to give the holy Sacrament to fuch a Person, is not contrary to any essential Duty of a Christian. The Priest indeed, if he knows him him to be unworthy, may use his own Power, as far as it reaches, which is only to admonish, reprove, or threaten; but if this will not deter him, the Priest hath no more to do, but to pray for him, and leave him to God and the Church. 6. Tho' it be justly afferted that the Judge, when he fits in Judgment, must lay aside all the Affections of the Man; yet he cannot lay aside his Knowledge; and if he lay afide his Confcience, he will make but an indifferent Judge. And yet we may fay, that his Affections are then chiefly to be laid aside, when they tempt him to Injustice: For a Judge certainly ought to incline to be merciful, if he knows it will not render him unjust. In a word; all those prudential Reasons, which are offered by the Patrons of the other Opinion, as Expedients for Judges to proceed by in such Cases, may be readily admitted, if they will fecure the Conscience, and the Lives of innocent oppressed Men: But if they will not, but that the Judge must determine according to Law, or to Conscience; the Case to me seems very clear: For God is greater than our Conscience, but our Conscience is greater than see Hower, and arches any thing besides. d ton han comount

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### AND THE RULE IX. TO 19 POLICE

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The Goodness of an Object is not made by Conscience, but is accepted, declared, and published by it, and made personally obligatory.

As an Emerald is green before the Eye perceives its greenness; so an Object hath a material, fundamental, and proper Goodness of its own, entirely independent upon the Judgment of our Reason, or our Conscience. And the Rectitude of Conscience depends wholly upon This, and follows upon the Perception of it. But yet, there is a formal, extrinsecal, relative Goodness, given to an Object by the Conscience; by whose Persuasion, tho' an evil Object is not made naturally good, yet it becomes personally necessary.

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The Design of this Remark is to shew, that we must rather attend to the Rule, than to the present Persuasion, and should take care that the Conscience be truly informed, before we suffer it to be determined. Now it is not sufficient that Conscience tells us Thus, unless God hath sirst told the Conscience. But yer, if the Conscience does declare for This, it engages us in it, whether it be right or wrong. But This hath in it some variety.

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1. The Goodness of an Act arises from the Goodness of an Object; or, in other Words, upon its Conformity to a rational Nature, and the Commands of God. All Acts of Will and Understanding are wholly undetermined, till their Relation to an Object be considered; and they then become bad or good, as the Object to which they relate, is good or evil respectively. To design an Act of Theft, is Evil, because Theft it self is fo; and to defign an Act of Justice, is therefore Good, because Justice it self is Good. So that our Conscience, because it is to take its Information from the Rule by which every Action is made Good or Bad, and its Determination from the Object; is obliged to regard That only which is really Good, and, without Sin or Error, cannot do otherwife.

2. But the the Conscience is bound to proceed this way, and tho' all things should be thought Good, only because they are Good; yet some Things are made Good, only because they are thought so. The Conscience fomerimes finds Error dreffed up in the shape of Truth, and as such embraces it. And tho' This can never become really and naturally Good; yet the Conscience supposing it Good, it is sometimes accepted by God, as Good and I that I the book so

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a. For the Measure of Good and E-wil be perfect in it self, yet it is not always perfectly understood by us. We are sometimes led away by Probabilities only. God therefore will graciously accept for Good, that which we really and innocently suppose to be so. God indeed requires the Service of all our Faculties, but demands no exact Measures from any but the Will. For the Acts of the Will are perfect in their kind, but not Those of the Understanding; This therefore may find an excuse, but That perhaps never will.

4. And hence it is, that the the Goodness or Badness of an Ast arises from the Quality of the Object regularly and naturally; yet the Acts may be made irregularly, or accidentally Good or Bad, by Conscience; that is, the Ast may be made Good by the Object really Good, or apprehended

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We shall therefore here consider, what changes can be made in moral Actions, by the Persuasion and Force of Conscience.

1. Whatfoever is absolutely and indispensably necessary to be done, and commanded by God expressly, cannot be changed by the Conscience into an Evil, or be made unnecessary. For where the Rule is plain, all Ignorance is voluntary; and therefore cannot render that which we do in Consequence H 2

of it, lawful or good: For this Reason Adultery, Murther, Sacrilege, and the like, can never become Good by any Act of Conscience. 2. But where the Rule is obscure, or the Duty so intricate, that the Conscience may unblameably err; there the Object may be changed by Conscience, and for that Reafon the Acts may, in some respects, be said to be Good or Evil. He who thinks it unlawful to give Money to a poor Turk, hath made it unlawful to himself; tho', in it self, it feems to be a pious Act. Wherever the Understanding is wrong, but the Will is wholly right; the Action is there accepted, and the Error pardoned. 3. When the Act is materially Evil, the Conscience believing it to be Good, does not so perfectly change it, as to make it really and absolutely Good. When two Men take up Arms, the one for his Prince, and the other against him; tho' each may be heartily perfuaded that he acts conscientiously, yet they do not equally do well or ill. The one shall be loved, and the other perhaps may be pardoned. But that Act which needs a Pardon, cannot be faid to be of equal Goodness with that which needs none. 4. If the Conscience pronounces a Thing necessary to be done, the Man is indeed obliged to do it. If a Man enquires whether he is bound to pray kneeling, or whether he may do it standing, or leaning,

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or lying; if his Conscience say, that he must do it kneeling, it is necessary he should do fo, and he may not do it in his Bed: But if his Conscience tells him it is only lawful, and not necessary; he is at liberty to do it, or let it alone. If the Conscience were to enquire, whether it were necessary to obferve an Holiday, or necessary to let it alone, and should determine That to be necessary to be done, which it is necessary to omit; the Man indeed is obliged to follow his Conscience, but he cannot avoid an Error. For Conscience; tho' it lays personal Obligations upon the Man, makes no real Alterations in the Nature of the Thing: And if it be Superstition to keep an Holyday, it cannot be made lawful or good, because the mistaken Conscience calls it necessary. And if it were otherwise, it would be of no moment what a Man thought; for his bare thinking so, would become his Law, and every Man might then do what is right in his: own Eyes. In this Case, what the Conscience falfly calls necessary, becomes so, perfonally and relatively only; that is, the Man cannot innocently go in the right way, fince his Guide leads him in the wrong; and and yet cannot innocently follow his Guide, because she abuses him. So that, in it felf, or in the divine Acceptation, that which the Conscience calls necessary, has only

in it something which is Good, a willingness to obey; and That God may regard. 5. An Action indifferent in it felf, tho' it shall be called Good by a mistaken Conscience, receives no alteration. It is but lawful still; and is only relatively good or necessary. And the' the Man may be rewarded for the Action; yet the Action has no Claim to Reward, as not being effentially Good. When the Lords of the Philistines, to avert the divine Judgments, offered to God golden Mice and Emerods, the Action was not at all agreeable to the manner in which God chose to be worshipped; but their Conscience telling them it was Good, it became lawful to them, tho' it was not Good. God faw they meant it for Good, and as fuch he accepted it. 6. If the Conscience being mistaken, calls a Thing lawful, which in the Law of God is not lawful; there the Conscience neither alters the Thing, or lays any Obligation upon the Person. The Case is this: Eleanora is married to a Man, who first uses her ill, and then leaves her. Being by fome Friends perfuaded, that the may lawfully be married to another Man, she is accordingly married to him. Her Confessor charging her with the Sin, she pretends, she was perfuaded in Conscience that she might do it, and therefore hopes to be exculed. He answers, that her Conscience could not make

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make that lawful which God had forbidden; and that therefore the Pretence of Conscience could be no Justification. So that here it is plain, the Conscience cannot alter the thing, which the Law of God had called Adultery; nor could it lay any Obligation upon the Person, since the she might suppose her self permitted to be married to another Man, yet she could not think her self obliged to it.

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## CHAP. III.

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Of the confident, or erroneous Con-

#### RULE I.

An erroneous Conscience commands us to do what we ought to omit; or to omit, what we ought to do, or to do it otherwise than we should.

HE only Difficulty in this Rule, lies in the last Clause. Zeal would necessarily lead us into Error, if we were to suppose, that every Instance of Perfection propounded by our Lord, were necessary to be exerted by all Persons, and at all Times. He hath recommended to us the Renuntiation of the World, spiritual Castration for the

who with a due regard to both Charity and Prudence, observes those Precepts, will find his Reward swell high: But he who thro' an intemperate Zeal of arriving at Perfection, should think these Advices literally necessary, hath abused his Conscience, laid an undue Restraint upon Christian Liberty; and that very Behaviour of his which began from his love of Religion, is now become little more than Fear, Scruple, or Superstition.

There are two ways by which an erroneous Conscience is generally abused. a true Application of a false Proposition. 2. By a false Application of a true Proposi-Thus, in the first Case, if I should fay, what soever is done against my Conscience is a Sin; this cannot be true with regard to the Consciences of other Men; but as it relates to my own Conscience, it certainly is true. And herein chiefly would be the Error of my Conscience; if I should make my own Conscience in these Respects, the Standard of the Consciences of other Men. As to the fecond Cafe, if I should fay, every Oath is forbidden by God, therefore every Oath is a Sin: Tho' the Proposition is certainly true, the Inference is by no means good and certain. For St. James in faying, swear not at all, forbids all kinds

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Oaths materially only; that is, in that sense in which Any are forbidden, in the same sense All are forbidden. We are not to swear at all, without just Authority, and upon pro-

per Occasions.

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The Caufes of Error are, I. Ignorance either of Right, or Fact. No other Divifion of Ignorance can concern the Relation of an erring Conscience. For tho' a Man be very differently concerned in Ignorance, as it is vincible, or as it is invincible; yet his Will is concerned directly, in that Ignorance which is vincible, but his Conscience only indirectly and collaterally. 2. Fear, whether it arises from Religion, or a natural weakness of Mind, does in like manner abuse the Conscience. Ignorance makes it err, but does not lessen its Confidence; it rather increases it. Fear makes it err too; and tho' it begins in doubting, it ends in a filly Choice, which gets as much Confidence as it can; and perhaps enough to establish the Error. To this is commonly reduced, 3. A morose Humility and Abjectness of Mind; which because it looks pitifully and simply, some Men are fo charitable as to commend and applaud it. Thus it has been made the fign of a good Mind, to accuse it self of a Fault, where there is none. But to admit of this in all Cases, would be very dangerous and illusive. For if the Question be in a Case of of Conscience, and the Conscience determines it felf regularly, and upon its proper Motives; there to acknowledge a Fault in the Confcience, or the Determination, would be to make Rule it felf irregular, to lay the Mind under eternal Scruples, and Irrefolution, to diffurb our own Peace, and to imagine we should please our God by telling a Lie. But if the Saying relates to the whole Action, confidered in all its different Circumstances and Relations; then indeed it may be confiftent with both Humility and Prudence, to suspect a Fault where there is none: As that fome Paffion may have had too great a share in the Determination; that there may have been fome obliquity in the Intention; that the procedure has not been, in every respect, fo just and regular, as it ought to have been; and the like. But even in this Case we may fafely fay with St. Paul, I am guilty of nothing, my Heart smites me not, yet am I not hereby justifyed, for God is greater than my Conscience: I may possibly have done fomething amiss, or my Duty not well; but as I cannot accuse, so neither can I acquit my felf, but refer my felf to God's equal and merciful Sentence.

Other Causes of an erroneous Conscience are usually assigned, but, I think, improperly: Such as withdrawing the divine Aids, Perplexity or Irresolution, Self-love, Pride, Prejudice,

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Prejudice, Passion, and the like: Which indeed are no otherwise causes of an erroneous Conscience, than as they are causes of Ignorance or Deception; which was before assigned as a proper Cause of an erroneous Conscience.

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An erroneous Conscience binds us to Obedience, but not so as a right Conscience does.

The Object moves the Will, no otherwise than as it is propounded by the Understanding. If it be propounded as Evil, the Will that chuses it, as such, is criminal and malicious. If it be propounded as Good, the Will that rejects it, despites Good. For if it appeared Good to the Understanding, it must likewise appear Good to the Will. And he that does a good Thing, while he believes it to be Evil, does chuse the Evil, and refuse the Good. For he does it, tho' he believes it to be Evil, and is therefore equally disposed to chuse a real Evil.

If it were not thus, if the Object did move the Will otherwise than as it is propounded by the Understanding; we should then be reduced to the Absurdity of saying, that a Man might do a Thing reasonably,

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for which he has no Reason; or perform humane Actions, without any sense of the

common Motives to Humanity.

Notwithstanding this Rule hath not been universally admitted. Several Writers have earnestly afferted, that it is impossible that an enring Conscience should oblige a Man to follow it. But since many of the Actions of our Lives are nearly concerned in the Resolution of this Point; it may not be improper to consider this Question; Whether a false and abused Conscience can oblige us to pursue the Error?

To shew that it cannot, these Reasons, among others, are commonly urged: That if an erring Conscience obliges us to follow it, then some Men are bound to perfecute the Church; that then the High Priests sinned not in the crucifying Christ; and the Zealots among the Jews were not to be blamed for afflicting the Disciples of our Lord, because they did it ignorantly, and from the Dictates of an erring Conscience. St. Paul thought himself obliged, before his Conversion, to do many things against the Name of the Lord Jesus; and yet he says, he finned in following his erring Confcience, and therefore certainly could not be bound to follow it.

Lib. de Thus likewise St. Bernard reasons on the Præcept. same side of the Question. To follow Truth

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is always Good! But if by the Conscience we can be bound to follow Error; and that, where the Conscience directs us that way, it is not good to follow Truth; that is, if a Good may become an Evil by the Sentence of an erring Conscience; then for the same Reason that which is Evil, may become Good. And the Consequences of this would be, that an Adulterer might be reckoned Chast; the Murderer, Charitable; and the Idolatrous and Disobedient, Men of Piety and Religion.

These I take to be the strongest Objections that can be urged against the Admission of the Rule: To which I answer,

That it is not the Error that binds us to follow it, but the Conscience in Error. Nor does it at all follow, that because the erring Conscience binds, therefore the Obedience to it is not a Sin. The Rulers of the Jews and St. Paul, were both called to repent of what they did in Obedience to their erring Conscience, which can never change the Nature of Impiety, but only makes fome Inflances of Error unavoidable. To St. Bernard's Objections, the Answer is easy upon another account. For Confcience may make a good Thing Evil to it felf; because, besides the Goodness of an Object to make it lawful, there are required the Belief and Persuasion of it in the Man: And if this be wanting, wanting, as it is in that erring Conscience which believes not the Goodness of it; the Action is Evil, because there is wanting the Persuasion of the Conscience to make it wholly Good. But on the other hand, Conscience cannot make an Evil thing Good, because, besides the Persuasion of Conscience, the Goodness of the Object is absolute-

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ly required.

In short, almost all the Reasons that are given against admitting the Obligation of the erring Conscience, derive their Force from hence; that the erring Conscience is, in its Obligation, uncautiously considered as er-Whereas, it does not bind as erring: but as it is Conscience; that is, not by its Error, but by its Nature, and the Power of God, as being the Reporter and Record of his Commands. He who advises us to proceed against it, thus understood, gives but ill Advice. He who counsels a Man to follow his erring Conscience, exhorts him to Folly; he observes to him, that he is in Error, and yet bids him not lay it aside. But he who advises a Man to follow his Conscience; tho, in Truth, his Conscience, at the same time, should be in Error, is not at all concerned in countenancing the Error, but only in keeping up the Power of Conscience. For all the Obligation our Conscience lays us under, is derived originally from our His ence by and it; our cha

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from God, who commands us to follow our Conscience, and yet forbids us to sin. His commanding us to follow our Conscience, supposes our Conscience instructed by the Word of God, and right Reason, and in all the proper means of avoiding it; and if we sin in obeying the Dictates of our Conscience, the Guilt is rather to be charged upon the Misbehaviour of the Man, than upon the Intention of God.

But for the fixing the Measures of Obedience in the present Case, the following Rules

are of most Importance.

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1. If an erring Conscience commands a Thing that is of it felf indifferent, we are obliged to follow it, and may do it without For it may lawfully be done for that very Reason, because it is indifferent; nor would it cease to be lawful, even tho' we should suppose it to be necessary. Indeed, if a Governor commands to do a Thing which is indifferent, and fays, it is necessary; we are not to give up our Christian Liberty, or take That to be necessary, which Christ hath not made so. We must do the Thing, but not own the Necessity. But if an erring Conscience bids us do an indifferent, and represents it as a necessary Action; tho' it may be a Sin to believe the Necessity of it, yet it can be no Sin to do it. But then it is to be observed, that as it may be done

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done without Sin, fo it cannot innocently be left undone. For the Action is supposed to be lawful, and the Error hath made it personally necessary. 2. If an erring Conscience represent a Thing as Good, which is not Good, it is no Sin to neglect the Dictate, or omit doing the Thing. For every Good is not necessary; and, in some Circumstances, it may be more proper, tho' it should be really Good, to omit, than to perform it. 3. If an erring Confcience affirm that which is Good, or Indifferent, to be Evil and Vicious; as, that it is a Sin to spit on the Pavement of a Church, or Superstition to ferve the Poor in an Hospital; it is no Sin to omit either the indifferent, or the commendable Action; because there is no Command of God to determine the Refolution of the Conscience either way. 4. If an erring Conscience says that such an Action is lawful only, when it is in it felf Good and laudable; we do not Sin, whether we do it, or omit the doing it. It may be a pious Action to pray kneeling on the Ground with our bare Knees; but if the Conscience fays it is by no means laudable, but only lawful; we may fafely do it, tho' we should believe there would be no Benefit derived upon us from an Action, which we supposed to be of no Merit, or Importance. 5. If an erring Confcience commands what is simply y d

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Evil, or forbids to do that which is absolutely commanded; the Man sins, whether he obeys, or does not obey. In the one Case, he sins against his Rule; in the other, against his Guide. The Use of these Rules is but little to erring Consciences, whilst the Error remains: For these Observations about Error, are not properly applicable to those who will not suppose themselves to be in Error, but to those only who are recovered from Error, and would be directed in the Conduct of their Repentance.

#### RULE III.

A Conscience erring vincibly, or culpably, is an unavoidable Cause of Sin, whether it be resisted, or complied with.

When the Error proceeds from Malice, or Ignorance, there is a Sin in the Principle, and leads to an Action materially Evil. He who forms Assemblies against his Prelate, and thinks he may lawfully do it; not only does an Action which is punishable by the Laws; but must beside be accountable to God for the Sin that led him into that Error.

But if it be asked, whether That also be a Sin, which is an Obedience to Conscience; I mean, whether the Action be a Sin, beat fides

fides the Malice of the Principle, and so every such Action become a double Sin; I answer, that the Resolution of this Question depends much upon the Nature of the In-

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which we are naturally, or clearly instructed; then the Error is certainly culpable, because it remains voluntary all the way; and then not only the Principle, but the Effect also is a Sin. The Man here is industriously blind; every Reslexion gives him a sight of his Sin, and he knows it habitually all the way.

2. If the Conscience be possessed with a damnable Error, and this Possession be a Dereliction, or Punishment from God for other Crimes; it signifies nothing whether we call the consequent Action a Sin or no. Every Action, in this state, is some way or other Evil. Our very Prayers are an Abomination: And then certainly the Actions which are materially Evil, are much worse, as they are Heightenings of this state of Sin.

3. If the Conscience be abused by a less certain Proposition, by evil Arts and Prejudice, by Interest and Partiality; there is so much Guilt in the whole Determination, as there was in the Cause of the Error, and no more. For the Object in the Case before us, seems to transmit a Degree of Honesty

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into the Action; not as it is in it felf, but as it appears to our Minds: And therefore we, not being supposed to know what it is in it self, cannot be certainly guided to chuse or refuse; but since we must be determined by something, it must be wholly by Opinion and Conscience.

4. If the Conscience be weak, or innocently misguided; there is no Sin either in the Error, or in the Action which follows upon it. No Man is obliged to do better than he can do; and where the Cause of the Error is not sinful; it is certain, the Man hath done his best; and to act by the best Light he can get, is to act conformably to Reason and Re-

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From these Conclusions we may easily infer, that the an erring Conscience is to be followed, and yet, that God also is entirely to be followed; and that therefore a Man, by Accident, or by his own Fault, may be very easily intangled in Sin: Yet, because he is under no Necessity of continuing in that Condition, but either by suspecting himself, or receiving the Admonitions of another, by Enquiry and Prayer, he may lay his Error down; it follows, that it will never be impossible to obey God, so long as a Man keeps himself in the state and possibility of Repentance. For it is impossible that bare Error should ever lead us into an Action both formally

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formally and materially finful. No Man can fay it is his Opinion, that it is finful to love God; that Rebellion is lawful; or that Adultery and Sacrilege are no Sins. These things are so plainly taught, that an Error about them, must be absolutely malicious. But where, thro' Weakness, or any other Cause, the Error is invincible, or irremediable, the Action there is innocent, in proportion as the Error was unavoidable.

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It is a greater Sin to do a good Action against our Conscience, than to do an Evil Action in Obedience to it.

This Rule is to be understood to be true, only where the Cases are equal, and neither of them differenced from the other by any certain and peculiar Circumstances of Guilt. And in this Sense it must hold good; because it is a greater Sin to offend against our Knowledge, than to sin ignorantly: And he that Sins against his Conscience, does Sin against all his Knowledge in that particular. But if he sins against a Commandment which he knows not to be such, he sins ignorantly, and therefore the more excusable. But I found Mercy, saith St. Panl, for I did it ignorantly and in unbelief.

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And for this Reason, it comes to be the same Kind, and the same Degree of Guilt, to sin against an erring, and against a right Conscience in the same Instances. He who omits to hear divine Service on a Festival, when he has no reasonable Avocation; and he who omits it upon a common Day, which he erraneously takes to be a Festival; have equally disobeyed the Law of the Church, and the Analogy of a divine Commandment, on which This of the Church is sounded; they being equally against the present determination of his Conscience, or the Rule, by which he is obliged to guide himself.

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It is not lawful to delight in an Evil Action, (after the Discovery of our Error) which we did innocently in an erroneous Conscience.

The Case is this. A Man being largely rewarded for having defended a forged Will, which he did not at that time know to be forged; afterwards finds the Forgery, but detains the Purchase, and becomes infamous. It was innocent till he knew it; but then to keep the Reward, was criminal. This, I think, is very plain. But when the Purchase may lawfully be kept, the Question is to be

be resolved in a different manner. A Man aiming at a Beast, unwittingly kills his Brother, and possesses a great Fortune by his Death. The Possession indeed is a Blessing; but the Accident which gave it him was a Missortune: But if he may not rejoice in This, he may not give Thanks for the other; no otherwise, at least, than he would thank God for a Missortune. If he pleases and applauds himself upon the occasion of his becoming Rich; it is plain that he would have killed his Brother designedly, if he durst.

An Act, when it is discovered to have been Evil, ought to give the Man no other Complacency, than he will find in the Reflection, that he did it ignorantly. He that fuffers nocturnal Pollution, is only to rejoyce that he fuffered it involuntarily; he is only to please himself in considering that he did not sin: And his hating the Act, is the only proper Test of the Innocency of his

Joy.

Indeed, in an Act whereby we have ignorantly transgressed only an humane Law, and the Transgression turns to our Advantage; we are more at liberty to rejoyce in it. For humane Laws make no Actions intrinsecally and essentially Evil; but only extrinsecally and relatively. And therefore the Danger is not so great of polluting the Conscience, by finding Pleasure in the Consequences

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fequences of an Action thus forbidden. But if I unwittingly offend against the divine Laws, which are effentially Good; to find Pleasure in tessecting upon such an Action, directly turns the Error into a Sin.

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An innocent, or invincibly erring Conscience, is to be obeyed, even against the known Commandments of our Superiors.

Claim to four Obadianas, ... And therefore The Objections that have been made to this Rule, are these. That lawful Superiors, are God's Vicegerents fet over us in Things pertaining to God, so as to be Executioners of the divine Laws; and to make Laws in Things indifferent and pertaining to Men; that all Contempt offered to them, is likewise offered to God; that it is scandalous to refuse to obey them; that it is Pride which makes Men think themselves wifer than their Superiors; and that he is not to be born, who fets his private Folly, above the publick Wisdom: And therefore, it may justly be afferted, that the Error of an abused Conscience ought to be laid aside; the Man is to suppose the Commands of his Superiors to be innocent; he is to give up his Doubts, and resign to their Authority. Onton where the Conference errs in a

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But all This touches not the Secret of the Question. For he that compares the Law of Conscience, with the Law of the Superior, compares the Law of God with the Law of Man: But the Question is not, whether a Man should follow his Superior, or whether he should direct himself; but whether God or Man ought to be obeyed? For here, the Conscience stands bound by the Supposed Law of God; which, because it is Superior to the Law of Man, has a stronger Claim to our Obedience. And therefore tho' it may be very true, that an erring Conscience, disobeying the lawful Commands of its Superior, does truly fin; yet it cannot be proved, that a Man would avoid Sin by obeying against his Conscience. Now, in this perplexed Conjunction of Things, wherein a Man is under a necessity of sinning one way or other; I think the Rule doth juftly and piously conclude, that the erring Conscience must rather be obey'd, because the Man is persuaded that he is under God's immediate direction; but is perfuaded, at the fame time, that his Superior is not. For, if after all the enquiry I can make, I am fully persuaded that my Conscience is determined by the Law of God; it will be the same thing to me, as if it were really fo determiped. But this is to be understood only in those Cases, where the Conscience errs innocently do in

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cently and unavoidably; which it can never do in the Precepts of Nature, and clear Revelation.

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The Error of an abused Conscience ought to be reformed, sometimes by the Command of the Will, but ordinarily by a contrary Reason.

Circumfances, we may eafily find for If we were engaged in Error by a probable Reason, it cannot be removed but by a Reason which seems equal to it; because a less Reason doth not naturally operate with fo much Force, as a greater Reason; and to affent to a less Probability against a greater, is to act against Reason, against all those Reafons, upon which the less Probability ought to have been outweighed. For in this Case the Will can have no Influence; which not being a reasoning Faculty, is to be determined by its own Motives, when it is not determined by Reason, or the Motives of the Understanding. Now the Motives of the Will, when it is not moved by Reason, are Pleasure or Profit; Ambition or Revenge; Partiality and Pride; Chance, or Humour: And how fuch Principles as these can difabuse the Conscience, is very hard to understand; but how readily and certainly they do abuse Degrance

abuse it, is easily conceiveable. For, in short, the Will never determines it self by any good Argument, unless the Argument be

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founded upon Reason.

Some indeed have affirmed, that the Error of a Conscience may justly be laid aside upon any probable Argument, tho' it be less strong and forcible. But if this were true, a Man might chuse his side as he pleased; because in all moral Things, as dressed with Circumstances, we may easily find some Degrees of Probability; but it is difficult to find any Case to which nothing can be objected.

Indeed, if the Reason on both sides seems equally probable, the Will may determine it self by any of its own Motives, provided they are honest. Where the Arguments appear equal, the Understanding or Conscience

cannot determine.

When the Conscience is erroneous, and the Error commenced upon Interest, trisling Views, or vicious Principles; the Error may honestly be set aside, tho' we have no other Reason for it, but the Discovery of the first abuse. The Will, in this Case, is enough. A Man may, and ought to hate the evil Principle of his Error, and decline it with some Indignation, which, in this Case, would be a part of Repentance. And this hints to you the Reason of this Discourse. For, Repentance

pentance is founded principally in the Will; and whatfoever a Man is to leave, upon the Stock of Repentance, he may do it wholly upon the Stock of his Will, as it is informed by general Propositions; without a full knowledge of the Particulars of the present Question. He that begins without Reason, hath cause enough to leave off, as soon as he sees he had no Reason to begin. And in this Case, the Will is the chief Agent; which cannot here be an ill Principle, because it leaves the Error, in prospect of Grace and Repentance.

### RULE VIII.

The Error of a Conscience is not always to be opened to the erring Person, by the Guides of Souls, or by any other charitable Adviser.

1. If the Error began with a Sin, or does necessarily produce a Sin, it is always to be discovered, whatever inconveniencies may follow upon the Discovery of it. To suffer a Man to remain in a state of Guilt, when it is possible to free him from it; would be to hazard an immortal Soul. For there is always some degree of Guilt in continuing in an Error, which may be removed.

2. If the Error be invincible, or innocent, in its Cause, but the Event be sinful or any way dangerous to the Souls of Men; the Error ought by any means to be discovered. The Novatians erred in the Point of Repentance. The Caufe of their Error, was a too active Zeal, and too great a Caution and Tenderness in avoiding Scandal, and judging concerning it. Now, tho', in this Cafe, the Error certainly arose from an innocent Cause; yet because it engaged them in such a Course of Discipline, and such a way of thinking as was not innocent; their Error ought to be laid open to them, even tho' the Discovery of it should accidentally slacken the Reins of Discipline. For Repentance, in their Sense of it, highly reflected upon the Mercies of God; it drove Men into Despair, and rendered the Power of the Keys, and other Ministrations of the Priesthood, in a manner, useless; and would, if it were purfued to its just Consequences, effectually hinder wicked Men from returning into the Bofom of the Church.

3. If the Error be invincible, and the Effect of the Persuasion be consistent with a state of Grace; the Error may be discovered, or not discovered, according to prudent Considerations relating to the Person, or the Condition of his Assairs. This, Comitalus says, was the Resolution of a Congregation

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of learned and prudent Persons, upon astrange Case which happened at Venice. A Gentleman ignorantly lay with his Mother. She proved with Child; and perceiving her Shame and Sorrow haftening upon her, fent her Son to Travel for many Years. He happens at his return to fee the Female Child, which his Mother had brought into the World: he likes her, and not knowing her, intends to make her his Wife. His Mother, almost distracted at this Design of his, urges him against it, with all the Reasons which her Authority, her Prudence, and her fecret Aversion to such a Conjunction, could furnish her with: But all to no purpose. The Gentleman married his own Sifter, and his own Daughter. Hereupon the Stings of the Mother's Conscience became intolerable; and some time after this prodigious Marriage, the asks her Confessor, to whom she had discovered the whole Affair, whether she were bound to reveal it likewife to her Son and Daughter, who now innocently lived in Love and Joy, tho' under a fecret Misfortune which they felt not. It was concluded that fhe ought not to reveal it, left she should introduce an infufferable Mifery into the place of That, which, to them, was no Sin; or left, after notice of the Error, they might be tempted by their mutual Endearments, and their common Children, still to cohabit,

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and fo turn That into a known Sin, which before, was but an unknown Calamity. They were therefore fuffered to go on in their Innocence, and all was thought well, under the Protection of an innocent, tho' mistaken Conscience.

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# CHAP. IV.

Of the probable, or thinking Con-

#### RULE I.

A probable Conscience is an imperfect Assent to an uncertain Proposition, in which one part is indeed clearly and fully chosen, but with an explicit, or implicit Notice, that the contrary is also fairly eligible.

A Probable Conscience lies so between the fure and doubt ful Conscience, that it partakes something of both. For a sure Conscience may begin upon a probable Inducement, but is made sure by a stronger Assent to the Conclusion, than the Premisses will justly allow. So that the probable Conscience differs from the sure Conscience on ly

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ly in the Imperfection or Weakness of its Affent. But because, in regard to the Imperfection of its Assent, it approaches somewhat towards the doubtful Conscience, and fo may feem very much like it; we are to observe, that it is still different from it, upon the score of its Determination. For the doubtful Conscience considers the Probabilities on each fide, but dares not, cannot chuse either. Indeed, by the intervening of the Will, it is plainly distinguished from both. For in the fure Conscience, the Will operates not at all; because it is wholly influenced by the Understanding, and its Motives. And in the doubtful Conscience, the Will is deterred from acting, by its Fear, Diffidence, and Uncertainty. But in the probable Conscience, the Will has its Force: because here the Will always comes in, and adds its weight to the Conclusion, which neither firitt Reason, nor Doubt would ever give it. Nor is there any thing blameable in fuch a Determination of the Conscience. For tho' he who believes his Opinion to be but probable, cannot but know it may possibly be false; yet he must know likewise, that he may innocently do That, for which he hath a probable Reason. In short, in moral Things, it is fufficient that a thing be judged true and certain, tho' by an uncertain Argument: And the Opinion may be, practicalby certain, when the Truth of it, in Specula-

tion, shall be only probable.

Reason and Authority are the two Motives which influence the probable Conscience, and are of great Moment, in order to Practice, of which I am to give account in the following Rules.

#### RULE II.

A Conscience that is at first, and in its own Nature probable, may be made certain by Accumulation of many Probabilities operating the same Persuasion.

Every probable Argument hath in it something of Proof and Persuasion; and tho' it do not afford Evidence and entire Satisfaction to a wife and discerning Mind, yet it gives all the Assurance that is necessary. For it were to impeach the wife Providence of God, to suppose, that he would permit wife and good Men, Men who study an Indifference to the Gratifications about them, who do all they can to fee clearly, who fearch as they ought to do, for Things they are obliged to find, for Things which they are commanded to fearch, and upon which even all their Interest depends; and yet, that these Men should be inevitably mis-led by their own Reason, the best Reason they have; and

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and that, when in regard to a Thing which cannot be demonstrated, we are yet to be so fully persuaded of it, as to hazard our Lives and Souls in the afferting it: I say, if this kind of Proof be not sufficient to effect all This; if it cannot sufficiently assure such Men, and support their Resolutions upon competent Reasons; Salvation and Damnation must then be by Chance, and will be indifferently the Lot either of the Good or Wicked.

This way of arguing some are pleased to call the way to moral Certainty, or Demonstration. Not that, like a Mathematical Demonstration, it can render a Proposition altogether clear and bright; but it can produce the same Effect, as it leads us into Truth, not with as much Clearness, but with as much Certainty and Infallibility in the Event of Things. For the Understanding cannot call any thing a moral Demonstration, till it has freely and impartially considered the Reafons urged on both fides of the Question: And as, on one fide, it must necessarily see Force and Strength, and on the other, Weakness and Pretence; it is impossible that both Parts of the Question should seem equally demonstrable to the same Understanding. Befides fome Propolitions which are only proved by probable Reasons, have been affented to by the wifest Men, as firongly, constantly, and

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and perpetually, as a physical Demonstration. The Understanding regularly takes the same Impression, gives the same Assent, and, when it is not bribed by Interest, or hurried away by Passion, for ever draws the same Conclusions, in Point of Assurance, from the one, as from the other.

Of this I shall take the liberty to give one Instance, which, as it is in it self of the greatest Moment in the World; so the gay, impious Men of the World, who generally derive their Character of Wit from their Impudence and Impieties, have made it now to to be but too seasonable: I mean, that the Religion of Jesus Christ, or the Christian

Religion, is from God.

I take it for granted, that there was fuch a Man as Jesus Christ, that he pretended fuch Things, and taught fuch Doctrines. But whether he was fent from God, and delivered the Will of God, must be determined by fuch Arguments only, as are proper to the Nature of fuch an Enquiry. They therefore who did not live in his Time, nor could behold the Miracles which he wrought; have no other way of being fatisfied, than by the Testimonies which have been given of him. Now if all the Prophets spoke of him; if there was an exact Correspondence between their Predictions, and his Person; if their Characters fitted him, and never any but

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but him; if he was born of a Virgin; and an interested and jealous Husband believed her fuch, when she had conceived this Child; if his Birth was fignified by an Angel, and effected by the holy Spirit of God:

If moreover, he wrought Miracles, raifed the dead to Life, and, by the Word of his Mouth, cast out Devils; if his own Testimony can be allowed, in favour of his coming from God, in that be did God's Will; if his Life was perfectly innocent and unaffected, holy and unipotted, laid out altogether in Actions of Holiness and Charity, and recommending Wisdom to the Minds, and Re-

formation to the Hearts of Men:

If his Crucifixon was attended with Circumstances plainly supernatural; if the Sun was eclipfed whilft he hung upon the Crofs, the Moon, at that time, being at Full; if the Rocks did rend, and the Veil of the Temple was rent in twain, from the top to the bottom; if the Dead arose and appeared to their Friends at Jerusalem, and the Centurion and many others fmote upon their Hearts, and were convinced that this was the Son of God; if three Days after his Burial, he rose again from the Dead, and for forty Days together converfed with his Difciples and Followers, and was feen by five hundred Brethren at one time, and was afterwards, in the fight of many of them, taken K 2 up up into Heaven, as Elias was, in the fight

of Elisha:

If these Things, I say, relate to the Perfon of the Holy Jefus, they sufficiently prove, that it was extraordinary, that it was divine, that God was with him, and therefore that it was God's Will which Jesus

taught.

And that these things relating to the Perfon of our Lord, are true; we may be as morally certain, as that, if they are true, he came from God. For we have undoubted Testimony in Proof of those Things, which is indeed the proper Proof of Facts, and the only one, by which, those who were not Witnesses to the Facts, can possibly be determined. was calipled wind the hang upon

# RULE III. 118 .0001/1911

Of two Opinions equally probable, upon account of their proper Reasons, one may be safer than another.

That Opinion is the most probable, which is supported by the most plansible Reasons, but that is the safer, which is farthest removed from a Sm. It is fafer to restore all the Gains of Usury; but it is more probable, that a Man is not obliged to do it. When we make Restitution, we are absolutely certain

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rain that we do not sin; but if we do not restore, we are supported, only by a great Probability, in the Opinion, that we do not Sin. But how far this Course is to be pursued, or the other to be preferred, will assured be considered.

#### mind ton Rule IV.

termination of the state of the

An Opinion that is speculatively probable, is not always practically the same.

In a right and fure Conscience, the speculative and practical Judgments are always united, as was observed in the beginning of this Work; but in Opinions that are but probable, the Case is different. It may be probable in Speculation, that it is lawful to baptize in the Name of the Lord Jesus; but he who does so practically, believes improbably, and unreasonably. Tho', in the Opinion of the primitive Christians, it were probably lawful to give the holy Eucharist to Children, yet in the present situation of Affairs, it would be highly improper to do it. It would be of much service to Mankind, if they would duly confider this; and not, from every tolerable Opinion, run immediately to an unreasonable and intolerable Practice. Some are pleased to say, that Churches are not more facred than other Places:

Places: Yet how great foever the Probability may be, which supports this Opinion; it would be a strange height of Folly to reduce it to Practice, to chuse to pray in a Barn,

when a Church may be had as eafily.

This irregular Behaviour among Christians, feems to arise from a false notion of Christian Liberty; as if Men could not be in Possession of it, but in breaking thro' all Laws and Customs, or had no other way to prove things indifferent, and not obliging, but by actually omitting to do them. Whereas, tho' we know we are free from the Bondage, we may yet innocently do the Work; and tho' our gracious Lord hath taken off our Fetters, yet we may fafely obey the Commands of his Stewards in any thing which has a relation to his Service. My Christian Liberty obliges me not to the Performance of a Thing indifferent; but it does not fay, that because I am not under the Power of the Thing, therefore I am not subject to the Authority of a Man. It is a strange Pertness and Infolence of Temper, to fet fuch a mighty value upon every Opinion and trifling Conceit of my own, as will engage me to maintain it at the hazard of the Churches Peace, in opposition to the wifer Customes of the World, or the Laws and Practices of a wife and well regulated Community of Men. Nothing, in short, can make amends for a cerplair Piet

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tain Change, but fuch a certain Truth as will plainly conduce to the Ends of Charity and Piety.

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#### RULE V.

The greater Probability destroys the less.

That is; it is unlawful directly to chuse an Opinion that seems less probable, before that which is more probable: I say directly; because, if the less probable Opinion be more safe, it accidentally becomes more eligible. But where this Circumstance of greater safety happens not; we are always to follow the greater degrees of Probability. Indeed, if a Man chuse a less probable Opinion, before he knows That which is more probable; he hath done well and safely: But when, upon comparing two probable Opinions, we reject the more probable; the procedure is absurd and unreasonable.

For, in all those Degrees of Reasonableness, in which the less probable Opinion is excelled by the more probable; Man wholly proceeds without, and against that Reason. And why does he chuse the less probable? I do not ask, why he chuses the less probable Opinion, that, I mean, which is so in it self; for he may do that, and it may appear very reasonable to him to do it: But

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lask, why he will proceed according to a less probable Conscience? Why does he chuse That which he takes to be less probable? For what Reason doth he chuse That, for which he hath the least Reason? And if there be no Reason to chuse That, before the other, it would be plainly unreasonable to chuse it. In short, our bare supposing an Opinion to be less probable, makes it absurd to say we can reasonably chuse it.

But this Procedure is not only unreasonable; but it is imprudent also. It is owing to the Levity or Negligence of his Heart, that a Man believes a less probable Opinion, and resules to apply those Means in order to his great End, which himself believes to be the most reasonable, effective, and expedient.

Nor indeed is it honest to proceed in this manner. For a Man cannot possibly believe That to be more likely, which appears to him to be less likely. He therefore that chuses the less likely, when it appears to him to be so; thwarts his Understanding, and abuses his Conscience; which, besides the Folly of it, cannot but be criminal.

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When two Opinions seem equally probable, the last Determination is to be made by Accidents, Circumstances, and collateral Inducements.

to thate an Oninion, our becaute we t Men differ very much in their Opinions about the Matter of this Rule. Some fay, the Understanding must for ever remain undetermined, and the Action wholly omitted, as in the Case of a doubting Conscience. Others are of Opinion, we may chuse either part, as we are inclined, allowing the Will to determine the Understanding. The first Opinion cannot be true, because while they both appear equally agreeable to Reafon, it cannot be dishonest to chuse that which to me appears reasonable; and therefore, in this Cafe the Understanding may chuse practically. When two things feem equally good, and alike move the Mind, and yet cannot both be enjoyed; I do not, because I take the one, refuse to take the other. Besides, there are many Cases in which we cannot help coming to a Determination; as if the Question be, whether This ought to be done, or be left undone; tho' both fides of it may feem equally probable, yet one fide must necessarily be chosen; for the very suspending the Ast here, is not a suspending of the Choice; the not doing it, is a Compliance with one of the Probabilities.

But neither can the second Opinion be true: For the Will alone must not be suffered to determine in this Affair. For, besides that it would be of dangerous Consequence to chuse an Opinion, only because we will; it is also unnatural, the Will being no Ingredient in the Actions of Understanding. Indeed, if there should not be any other way to decide the Question, the Will must do it, because there is no avoiding it; but if there be any other way, as ordinarily there is, this must not be taken.

The Conscience therefore, in determining it self between two Probabilities, which seem equally to move and affect it, is to be influenced by some external Accidents, Circumstances, and Judgments. But of all external Motives, those which have the nearest relation to Piety, are of greatest concernment. That which causes more Honour to God, that which happily engages Men in holy living, that which is most charitable, and useful to Men, is certainly to be preferred.

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It is not lawful to change our practical Sentence about the same Object, while the same. Probability remains.

A Man may change his Opinion as he fees Caule, or alter the Practice of it, upon a new emergent Reason; but when all the Circumstances of it remain unaltered, the Man is not to change it, unless in those Cases, wherein a Law, a Vow, a Duty, or the Interest of a third Person be concerned; that is, unless the Actions are in themselves indifferent, innocent in their Circumstances, and fo cannot disturb the Conscience.

I shall give an Instance to explain the Import of this Rule. A Gentleman happened to be at Rome the three and twentieth of August, which is usually St. Bartholomew's Eve; but there it is observed on the twenty fourth Day. He refused to fast on the ordinary Day of the Vigils, as he used to do; because he was then at Rome, where the Custom was different. He eat his Meals therefore this Day, and resolved to fast the next Day: But being hungry the next Day, he changed his Opinion, and went from Rome into the neighbourhood of it, and kept the Feaft of St. Bartholomew, without observing

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the Eves. Now this is only to elude the Duty, to take away the Force and Import of the Law, by trifling with the Letter of it.

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#### TOUR OLD VIII.

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An Opinion relying upon very slender Probability, is not to be followed, except in Cases of great Necessity, or great Cha-

Were it lawful to follow every Degree of Probability, how little foever, it would put it in each Man's choice to do almost what he would, and do it innocently. For all Marriages might be dissolved, all Vices extenuated and excused, upon Pretence of some little probable Necessity. Drunkenness might be considered and recommended as a means of Health, and Fornicators, as a fet of Men, whom God will not judge.

Not but that, in some Cases, the Obligation even of flender Probabilities, is to be admitted; nay, it is convenient it should be admitted; especially, when the Motives for admitting it, are very necessary, and very charitable. The Case is this. A certain Man, having heard a particular account of his abfent Wife's Death, after some time, marries another. The new Wife accidentally hears, that he was misinformed, and that his former Wife, Wife was still alive, and consequently, that the her felf lived in a State of Adultery. This troubled her exceedingly, till fhe was certainly informed that the Woman was lately dead. Now here a difficulty offers it felf to her; whether she is obliged to inform her Husband of the Matter, that they might renew a Contract, which hitherto, she found, might have been invalid? She knows he is a vicious Man, that he hates her, and wishes her dead; the therefore fears that he'll gladly (as foon as he shall be informed of it) lay hold on the Invalidity of the former Contract, and think himfelf under no Obligation to renew it. In this Case therefore, because it is necessary she should some way or other be relieved, it feems to be lawful for her to follow that little Probability which favs, that her consent may be fufficient to render the former Contract valid. For this Decision is made in behalf of an innocent Marriage, and in favour of the Legitimation of their Children, and will prevent much' Evil and Mifery to them both.

their Anthonity of any number of Men, who take up an Opinion with a virible view to their layer layers of Calvin and their layers of Calvin and the layer layers of Calvin bave freen in Power, that it is lawful to put latericks,

# Wife was full alive, and conferently, that the the feet feet, fived XI adultery. This

Multitude of Authors is not ever the most probable Inducement, nor doth it in all Cases make a safe and probable Conscience.

This Rule is true, and is to be observed in the following Cases. 1. When there is a strong, or highly probable Reason against the common Opinion, then the common Opinion is not the more probable. For a Reason is an internal Motive directly fitted to the Conscience; but humane Authority, or the Citation of Authors, is but an accidental and external Motive, and defigned to supply the Defect of Reasons. 2. So, an Opinion, which is espoused by a whole Clergy, but founded only upon the Veneration they have for a Man of their own Order, who first advanced it; is to be reckoned as the Opinion but of one Man. This is plainly true of those, who take up an Opinion, without confidering it; and if they have confidered it, their Reasons are to weigh with us, more than their Authority. 3. We are not to rely upon the Authority of any number of Men, who take up an Opinion with a visible view to their Interest. The Followers of Calvin and Beza have generally taught, when they have been in Power, that it is lawful to put Hereticks, He yet deficate who the Au far no main he

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Hereticks, or obstinate Persons, to Death; yet none who live under them, can justly defer to their Authority in this Point, because they never assert this in those Places where they are not in Power. 4. Under these Restrictions, indeed, the Multitude of Authors hath a presumptive Authority, so far as there is no Reason against the Thing, nor against the Men. It can never indeed make the Conscience sure; but it may be innocent, because it is probable; whereas, he that relies upon Authority only, is governed by Chance.

When a Man of Sense and Learning is said to be determined by the Authority of Writers; it might, with greater Propriety, be said, that it was the Reasons, rather than the Numbers of those Men, which persuaded him. So that Authority, in this Sense, seems calculated only for the weak and ignorant: And the ignorant are so little able to chuse their Authority, that, I think, they had better, in the main, submit to That they are already under, than bewilder themselves in

the vain Pursuit of another.

The most proper way to conduct the Ignorant in their Cases of Conscience, in which themselves have no Skill, is This; to observe to them, that they must believe One, and if they have a better way to proceed in, let them pursue it: If they have not, this they

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they are in, is certainly fafe, because it is their best; and no Man is obliged to make use of better than he hath. They are, indeed, to make it as good as they can by enquiry, by Prayers, by innocent and honest Designs; for these are most likely to secure our Way, by Means of God's Providing. Nor can there be any Irregularity in this, because it is the best Obedience that can be paid by weak Minds; and there is no Danger in it, because the Piety and Prayers of the Man, will draw down God's Blessing upon his in-

nocent well-meaning Soul.

But here it may be asked, how shall the ignorant and vulgar People proceed in fuch Cases, where their Teachers are divided? 1. I answer, that in the main, it is better to difregard their Divisions, and follow them only in those things, wherein they agree: But if they must declare on one side, let them engage in that, which they take to be the fafest, or the most pious, the most charitable, and the most ufeful; that so by collateral Confiderations, they may determine themselves in That, which, by the Authority, feems equal, and indeterminable. 2. The Authority of one wife and good Man, or one so reputed, is a probable Argument and fufficient Guide to ignorant Men in doubtful Matters, where there is no clear or known Revelation to the contrary! And we

we are not to dispute whether the Argument be good, or no, when we are sure it is his best. 3. But if different Men equally Wise and Good, think differently upon the Question, and the Enquirer is obliged to be determined by one; he is rather to follow his own Parish Priest, or his Bishop, than a Stranger who shall be equal to them in all other Respects, only that he bears no relation to the Enquirer, as a Pastor.

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In following the Authority of Men, no Rule can be antecedently given for the Choice of the Persons; but the Choice is wholly to be conducted by Prudence, and according to the Subject Matter.

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The Ancients are more venerable; but perhaps the Moderns are more knowing. Antiquity taught the Millenary Opinion; that Infants were to partake of the holy Eucharist; and that, without Baptism, they were condemned to the Flames of Hell; that Angels were corporeal; with many other Opinions, which we know not how to admit. So that no Company of Men will now affert, that the Fathers, in all Cases, are rather to be followed than their Successors. In many Points, indeed, they undoubtedly had

had the Advantage of the Moderns, as they lived nearer the Apostolick Times, had surer and more firm Traditions, and were even Wirnesses of many important Facts, about which the Christian World is now so wretchedly divided. Their Piety was more warm, and their Manners more uncorrupt: But we do not find that their Knowledge was more extensive; unless in regard to Facts relating to the Discipline, Government, and usages of the first Ages of the Church. Several of their Opinions are demonstrably false, and their Interpretations of many parts of Scripture, erroneous.

For these Reasons, he who would submit to the Authority of any denomination of Men, will behave more regularly, if he confiders, first, the Nature of the Subject Matter, and then yield to the Authority of Those, who appear to him to be best able to judge of it. Indeed, the Analogy of Faith, the Piety of a Proposition, the Safety and Innocency of it, are right Measures to guess at an Article; but Thefe are more intrinsecal; and fometimes fo difficult, that they cannot be duly attended to, but by Those who can judge of Reason, and so are under a less Neceffity of being guided by Authority. But for Those, who are wholly to be led by the Power and Opinion of their Guide; besides what hath been already advised, the Faculty and we latin

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and Profession of Men is to be regarded. We are to rely upon Divines in Things relating to their Profession, and upon Lawyers in Matters of Law.

# the Probability, which mires from his Re-

He that bath given Assent to one part of a probable Opinion, may lawfully depose that Conscience, and that Opinion, upon Considence of the Sentence of another.

A Priest being sent for to do the last Offices to a dying Man, finds him speechless, but, in dumb signs, shewing the greatest Marks of Penitence. The Priest is at a loss to know, whether he ought to absolve a Man, who gave him only such Marks of Repentance as might possibly arise from another Cause. At last he consents to the negative Opinion as probable: Yet sinding some Men of Learning dissented from him; he does not act in Consequence of his own Opinion, but in Compliance to theirs, absolves the sick Man. This Behaviour of his was condemned upon a supposition, that to act against his Opinion, was to act against his Conscience.

But it should be considered, that the Priest doth not directly consent to that part of the Question, which he hath chosen, as that upon which he will finally rely; but he agrees

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to it only as a thing that is probable. And because he believes it only probable, and consequently knows he may possibly be mistaken; he may as well take that part of the Probability, which arises from his Regard to the Reputation and Abilities of other Men, as the other, which proceeded from Considerations of such Arguments, as did but lightly and gently move his Assent. For he may prudently suppose, that in what he is not certainly persuaded, another may possibly be wifer, may know more, and judge better.

But this Rule is to be understood with these Cautions. 1. That, as far as we can judge, the Man on whom we rely, be neither ignorant, nor vicious, but a proper Person to direct others. 2. That we do not rely on others, out of Idleness, or Impatience to enquire our selves. 3. That we do not take the other's Opinion; only because it serves our Interest, or our Humour. 4. And that we are sure we receive his Opinion, only against a probable Persussion of our own, and not against a sure Conscience.

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2. When he is really indifferent to any part He that enquires of several Doctors, until be find one answering according to his Mind, cannot by that enquiry make his Conscience fafe; but according to the Subject Matter, and other Circumstances, no be may and Encouragement and star vam an mination from him whom he chines for his

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St. Paul observes the Folly of such Men, who heap up Teachers of their own, that is, fuch as teach what they defire, and declare Things to be lawful, which God never made fo: And he who hath already taken up an Opinion, who is in love with it, and longs to be further encouraged in it, is not, ordinarily, the more secure for the Opinion of his Guide; for it was not his Guide who procured his Affent, but a Resolution which he had fixed before. In this Case, to procure the Opinion of a learned Man, is no better than a difingenious Artifice to quiet the Spirit; for it can be of no moment to the Honesty of the Persuasion, or Conscisule it may not be true! And he m. sons

Not but that there are some Cases, in which this Change of Guides and Enquiries, may not be only innocent, but likewise the means of a just Confidence. As, 1. When the Enquirer hath very probable Reasons for his

Opinion, and remains really unfatisfied with the Answers of those he first applied to.

2. When he is really indifferent to any part that may appear true, but it happens that nothing appears true to him, but what he hath already entertained.

4. And when the Design of the Enquirer is to be strengthened in any Virtue, or pious Condition of Life; he may take his Encouragement and Determination from him whom he chuses for his Opinion's sake, and a Conformity to his own pious Intentions.

### bem reven bo RULE XIII. Lad or appli

He that is asked concerning a Case, that is on either side probable, may answer against his own Opinion, if the contrary be probable and more safe, or more expedient and favourable.

And the Reason is, because he who holds an Opinion, which himself believes to be only probable, knows, that he is under no Necessity of recommending it to another, because it may not be true: And he may rather advise the contrary to another, than sollow it himself, because the other is hitherto indifferent, but himself is already determined. But why he should rather do so than recommend his own Opinion, there is

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no Reason in the Thing, but something relating to the Person who enquires. As, if the Opinion which he entertains not, be visibly more agreeable to the other's Circumstances and Necessities, and may innocently be recommended, in order to redress them.

## Rule XIV. Lander of the control of t

When the Guide of Souls is of a different Opinion from his Charge or Penitent, he is not bound to exact Conformity to his own Opinion, which is but probable, but may proceed according to the Conscience of the Penitent.

I mean; supposing the Opinion of the Penitent to be probable, and that he did the Astion conscientiously, as it appeared to him, worthy and commendable; he is not then to be troubled with what is pass'd; lest that be changed into a scruple which was no Sin, and the Guide judge unrighteous Judgment, and prescribe Penitence for That, for which God will never call him to account: For in this Case it is, that no Man can be a judge of another Man's Conscience. But if the Opinion of the Penitent be evidently salle, or does encourage, or occasionally minister to Sin; the Guide of his Soul must, upon no account, comply with it.

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RULE

# lating to the Reverse was required. As if, the Opinion white August not, be vi-

The Sentence and Arbitrement of a prudent and good Man, though it be of it self but probable, yet is more than a probable Warranty to Actions otherwise undeterminable.

If two Cases that seem equally probable, have in them different Degrees of safety; it is certain that the safest is to be chosen; but it frequently happens, that the Opinion of a good Man is our best Rule to judge of that safety. When Piety and Religion, for Instance, are in Competition for our present Artendance, sometimes we are to preser Piety to our Parents; at other times, to perform an Act of Religion; but what Proportion of our Services is to be allowed to each, is, according as a wise and good Man shall determine.

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and the Canda Mege anxighteous fundement, and preferibe Februare for That, for which God will never call him to account: For in this Case it is, that no Man can be a funder of amorber Minds Carleience. But, if the Pair no be evidently falfe, or does encourage, or occasionally minister to Sin a the Cause of his Soul must, upon no account, comply with it.

### unhappy State. To the better understanding of which, Ve geath Ordider Donber,

Of a doubtful Conscience.

## ACT Or whether I did fuch an Action, and

A doubtful Conscience assents to neither side of the Question, and brings no direct Obligation.

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Onscience cannot directly and properly be called Conscience, when its Operations are not positive and practical: And because it binds to Obedience by the determination of the Understanding, and the affent of the Will; when the Understanding is not determined, nor the Will inclined, there can no Action follow.

There may here indeed be exerted a reflex Act of Conscience and Understanding;
for when we consider that our Conscience is
doubtful, and not to be determined, we are
obliged to suspend our Action: But this is
the Act of a right, not of a doubtful Conscience; because, in this Point, we are certain, right, and determined. So that a doubtful Conscience, in this Sense, is improperly
called Conscience, and cannot be a direct Rule
of humane Actions.

However, there are some indirect and collateral Obligations laid upon a Man in this unhappy unhappy State. To the better understanding of which, we are to consider Doubts, as relating either to Law, or Matters of Fatt; that is, whether fuch a Thing be lawful? Or whether I did fuch an Action, and am thereby bound to Restitution or Repentance? Moreover, Doubt's may be confidered as Negative, or Positive, that is, they remain upon us because we have no way to determine the Understanding. The negative Doubt confifts in the absolute Want of Arguments; but the positive Doubt, not in the Want of Arguments, but in the Equality and Indifference of them. Sometimes also a Doubt is feated only in the Understanding, without any other Effect than the Trouble and Confusion of the Mind; and then for method's fake, and the better understanding the Rules of Practice, it is called a feculative Doubt. But when that Doubt paffeth on to the Conficience, and affecteth the Action, fo as to obstruct its or render it criminal, then it is called a practical Doubt do

From thefe Diffinctions, the following Rules will appear ufeful in order to Practice.

tain, right, and determined. So that a doubtful Conscience, in this Sense, is improperly called Confeience, and cannot be a direct Rule EtuRmane Actions

However, there are fome indirect and collateral Obligations laid upon a Man in this uninappy

#### RULE II.

A negative Doubt neither binds to Action, nor Enquiry, nor Repentance; but it binds only to Caution and Observance.

I. It binds not to Action. For whatfoever is done in Consequence of a doubting Conscience, that is, without a full Persuasion that it is lawful to do it, is a Sin. For if we do it with a doubting Conscience, we do it without our Rule, which is the Dictate of our Conscience: For fince no Action is indifferent as to lawful and unlawful, tho' it may be, as to Bad and Good; to do it without our Rule (of its being lawful and permitted) is to act against it. Besides; he who does not know whether it be lawful or no, if he yet does it, may perform an Action displeasing to God, and which, for all he knows, God may have forbidden. Nor, 2. Does it bind to Enquiry; because there is no possibility of coming to a Resolution of the Question, for want of Arguments. Nor, 3. Does it bind to Repentance: For no Obligation can arise from that which is not, or which we cannot possibly know. But, 4. It does bind to Caution and Observance: Everything does fo, where we suspect there either is, or may be any Danger; and therefore therefore for This here needs no peculiar Reason, any surther, than that, as the Negative Doubt may approach towards a Probability, that the Matter is, as we doubt; the Observance should be more strict, and the Caution more secure, as it generally happens in suspicion, which is but the Image of doubting.

## Conference, that III, al un a tat Per non.

A privative Doubt cannot of it self hinder a Man from acting what he is moved to by an extrinsic Argument, or Inducement, that is in it self prudent or innocent.

And the Reason is, because there being no Law against it, by which the Man is actually ruled, and no Reason appearing in opposition to it, (which is always the Case of a privative Doubt) that is, there being no intrinfecal diffwafive, the Confcience here is left to the Conduct of fuch as are extrinfecal. For all Actions are indifferent, till they are restrained by some Law superinduced upon them; which Law was never made plain to me, if, inculpably, I have no notice of it in my Conscience. But here we are to take care, that, in entering upon Actions against which we know no Law or Reafon, we be not sudden, violent, or careles, like 51061901

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like an Horse rushing blindly into the Battle: Because they may possibly, tho' we do not see it, affect the Interest of another Person.

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In doubts of Right, or Law, we are always bound to enquire; but in doubts of Fact,

Ignorance of our Duty is generally a Sin; and it is certain, that he who perceives himfelf in a state of Danger, and resuses to enquire after his Duty, is plainly unwilling to do it. In Matters of Fact, we are bound, ordinarily, to enquire, because we ought to be well acquainted with the State of our Consciences, and what Obligations we are under to Restitution or Repentance.

In some Cases, indeed, it may be safer to trust the Event of Things to a general Repentance, than that the Conscience of some Men should be tempted with a particular Notice of the Fact. This respects those Men, particularly, whose Spirits are more languid, their Minds softer, and more apt to give way to dismal, or melancholy impressions. The Case is this; a Gentleman having been lately recovered from a long Melancholy he had been under, is prevailed upon to take

the Diversion of Shooting with some Friends. At a general Discharge of their Arrows, a Man happened to be kill'd; but whether by his Arrow, or no, he knew not, and was advised not to enquire. The Advice was certainly warrantable; for the knowledge of it could not have done him so much Good, as it would have done him Hurt: And it was better to suffer him to remain in a doubting, than a despairing Conscience, as his in all likelyhood, would have been, notwithstanding the Innocency of the Murder.

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But in Matters of Right, or Duty, enquiry is always to be made, when the Question is about the Lawfulness or Unlawfulness of what is to be done; because we enter upon Danger, neglect our own safety, and diffegard our Duty, our Conscience, and our God; if we do not diligently examine into the Action we are about to do, whether it be good or bad. But when the Act is done, and done under an actual Persuasion, that it was lawful to do it; the Conscience of that Person ought not to be disturbed, unless in order to prevent other ill Consequences.

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In Doubts, the Safer part is to be chosen.

This Rule is to be understood to be good Advice, but not necessary in all Cases. For when when the contrary is the more probable Opinion, but This the more fafe; to do This, is generally an effect of Piety, and a strong Inclination to do Good; but it is sometimes the effect too, of a weak Understanding, such a one as is too much inclined to scruple, who hardly dares trust the Truth of his Proposition, or God with his Soul, in the Pursuit of it.

Thus, in the Case of Justice, it is the furer way, in many Cases, to restore; and is, at least, a Mark of a very honest Mind; which to secure an eternal, will give up a temporal Interest. But if to restore, will undo a Man, and it be probable that he is not bound to do it; then, tho' Restitution be the safer way, it certainly is not necessary; and there is less Reason still for making Restitution, if the Interest of a third Person, as of Wife or Children, be concerned in the Question. For in this Case, one Duty would be certainly omitted, for the securing another, which is by no means certain.

But in the Application of this Rule, these Measures are principally to be observed.

I. If the Doubt be unequal, and the Danger equal; we are to resolve on that part, where there is less cause of Doubt apprehended: As, if I have but wherewith to relieve One necessitious Mau, and yet behold Two ready to perish; the Danger is equal:

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But One is my Friend, the Other a Stranger to me; in this Case the Doubt 'is unequal, and I ought certainly to prefer the Interest of my Friend. 2. If the Danger be unequal, and the Doubt equal; Considerations of fafety may here determine our Refolution. 3. If the Doubt be unequal, and the Danger unequal; there we must take the least Danger, tho' with the less Probability; because no degree of Sin ought to be confented to. As, when a Man doubts wheit be lawful, by an officious Lie, to fave a Friend from Murtherers; as long as the Doubt remains, he is rather to run the hazard of committing an uncertain Sin, in telling an officious Lie, than venture the committing a greater Sin (as it may happen to be) in giving up his Friend to the Assassins. But if on one fide only there be Danger, but on both sides a Doubt; that fide, no doubt, is to be chosen where there is no Danger, unless the Doubt, on one fide, be inconsiderable, and the other by no meens certain of greater moment. But in the Application off

#### Meatures are IV and assurable

It is lawful for the Conscience to proceed to Action, against a Doubt that is meerly speculative.

It is very easy for a Man who imagines strongly, and talks well, by weak Arguments

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to embarrass the Minds of weak Men; and create a speculative Doubt, which shall destroy all the certainty of Evidence they had before. Bur if these Men were not to slick to their own conclusion, in opposition to any Objections that may be artfully raifed; they might distrust every thing, and be consident in nothing; might be prevailed upon by an Heretick to change their Persuasion for his, and give up the most important Points of their Faith. Doubts of this Nature may, by an artful Adversary, be raised even in the Minds of Men of the best Sense; but then, their good Sense directs them not instantly to change their Practice, but to enquire further. For if, after every fuch Doubt, their Practice must be infecure or criminal, they might be forced to a Lightness of Mind, greater than that of the Egyptian Priests. Some Men who cannot dispute well, can believe well, and reasonably; and therefore their Faith ought not to be changed by fuch Arguments, as are never wanting to fophistical Wits. In these Cases, the Practice is made fecure, by a collateral Light; and he is kept from change by Reputation, and Custom, by the dread of Scandal, and the Sanction of Laws, and by some other indirect Instruments of Determination, which although they cannot shew the Weakness of the contrary Arguments, yet they ought to outweigh outweigh the Doubt, and guide the Will, and, in such Cases, determine the Conscience.

There is nothing but a weak Man may be made to doubt of; but he is not to alter his Practice, till he is sure he has been deceived. For if the speculative doubting Conscience should always prevail in Practice; the weak and ignorant might be abused and made miserable in all Things, and the most knowing, in very many.

### RULE VII.

Every Dictate and Judgment of the Conscience, tho' it be little, and less material, is sufficient, and may be made use of for the Deposition of a Doubt.

Every little Reason is not sufficient to direct the Will, or to make an honest or probable Conscience. But in a doubting Conscience, where there appears to be great Reasons on each side, and the Conscience, not able to determine between them, remains like a Needle exactly placed between two Loadstones, which inclines so equally to both, that it can go to neither of them; there, any little Reason which may intervene, may be suffered to give a Determination. For, in the doubting Conscience, the immediate Case

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Case is not to chuse right; for That is the Remedy in an erring Conscience; but when Doubt, or Suspence is the Evil to be removed, the proper Remedy is Determination.

But the Cautions chiefly to be observed in the use of this Rule, are, that when the Judgment of a Man is plainly weak, and not to be trusted; his Doubt is rather to be laid aside, by another Man who shall be thought able to lead him. The Sacredness of Concience is, as little as possible, to be conducted by Weakness and Contingency. Or, if the doubting Person be naturally light, and inconsistent, let him take the more care, that he does not fpeedily act, what, in consequence of his own Temper, he had lightly determined upon. We are likewise to take care, that we do not mistake Fear for Doubt: For sometimes a Doubt happens to be only in the Will; and the weaker the Judgment is, thestronger, generally, is the Fear. When therefore, as in this Case it generally happens, the Doubt is fuch, that we neither know, nor can give any tolerable Reason for it, but is only an unreasonable Trouble; it ought directly to be laid aside.

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When two Precepts contrary to each other, meet together about the same Question, that is to be preferred which binds most.

He who, having fworn to do a wicked Action, breaks his Oath; offends God by putting his facred Name to a Lie and a Villany: But he who observes the Oath he hath thus made, despises the Commands of God, hurts his Neighbour, and destroys himself. Now there being worse Evils on this side, than on the other; of the two, we are to avoid This. For if all Evil is to be avoided, all the Degrees of it are to be avoided likewife; and where we cannot avoid as much as we should, we are to avoid as much as we can. The leffer Evil, in respect of the greater, is to be esteemed a fort of Good; for the leffer Evil is rather to be chosen than the greater, and what is, in any fense, more eligible, is, in some sense, Good; and that which is more eligible, is, of the two, the greater Good.

But it is somewhat harder to come to a Resolution upon this Case, when it relates to another Person. As if it should be demanded, whether it be lawful, in order to take a Man off from greater Sins, to advise

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him to a lesser Sin? The Case is this: A certain wanton young Man falls into Adulteries and unnatural Lusts. His Friend exhorts him to leave those horrible Vices; and if he must indulge his Lust, he had better confine himself to simple Fornication. Now whether his Friend is right in giving this Advice, is properly the Question? And the Reason of doubting it, is this; that he who advises Evil, is guilty of the Sin which he recommends.

To this it may be answered; that in the Case before us, Sin is so far from being countenanced, that it is reduced to as small a Proportion, and as near to an Extirpation, as the Temper and Resolution of the vicious Man will, at present, admit; and it is from an hatred to Sin, that this less pernicious way is propounded. For where the Inclination of a Man is certainly known, and his Resolution to indulge it, cannot be overcome; to advise him to a less Instance of Guilt, is certainly the best Advice we can give him. It is indeed a fad Necessity we are here reduced to; but we cannot help it: The leffer Evil is to be endured till it may be remedied, with a remedy that is not worfe than the Difeafe.

Upon this occasion, it may not be amiss to enquire into the Obligations of Women married to adulterous Husbands; and to exa-

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mine, whether it be lawful for a Wife, who would fain live in some Degree of Comfort, to connive at her Husband's stolen Pleasures, and suffer him quietly to enjoy his Folly? And what is the Woman's Duty, or her most prudent Course, and manner of Deportment?

St. Ferom, St. Chryfostom, with others of great Reputation in the Church of God, abfolutely condemn it as unlawful, for a Man or Woman to live with either Husband or Wife respectively, if either of them be notoriously guilty of Adultery. But, I believe it may be certainly shewn, that it is not barely lawful, but that it may be very pious and charitable, for a Wife still to cohabit with an adulterous Husband. That it is lawful, is certain; because there is no Prohibition by a divine Command, no natural Turpitude in it: And that he, or she, respectively, may still live with the finning Person; needs no other Proof than this, that the innocent, being the injured Person, may, if he pleases, forgive the Injury. And that it may be pious and charitable so to do, is certain on the same account on which it may be reckoned Piety and Charity, to fuffer Injuries, to be patient and long fuffering, to exhort, to bring a Sinner to Repentance, and to fave a wicked Man from the Evil of his Way.

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But our Behaviour herein is to be guided

by the following Measures.

1. The innocent Person must not be bound to do This, because the Union being diffolved, the Criminal hath loft his Right; and therefore, if the other use their own Liberty, they do no Wrong. 2. The innocent Person may lawfully retain the Criminal, tho' he or she have no other view in it. than the Love of the Perfon, or any other Thing, that is in it felf lawful and honest. 3. This Cohabitation may last as long as there is any hopes of Repentance; which may be endeavoured to be brought about by all the means which are put into Hands of the Innocent, by the Diforders of the Guilty; and by which the Offender can be made better, and will not be made worfe. 4. But if there be no hopes of Repentance, yet still, the innocent Person may use his own Right; because that may possibly happen, which we have ceased to hope for. How knowest thou, O Woman, fays St. Paul, whether thou shalt gain thy Husband? 5. Indeed, where the retaining the Adulterel's hath been actually fcandalous, the Church hath been more cautious in her Remissions of this kind, and hath ordered the innocent Person to put the guilty Woman away. And therefore the Fathers, in the Council of Eliberis, refused to give the Sacrament to a Clergyman, even at the bus

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the last; unless he immediately dismissed his adulterous Wife. But this was rather a marter of Decency, as he was a Clergyman, than of indispensable Necessity. 6. The innocent Person, must not directly, by any Compliance, Cohabitation, or Indulgence, countenance, or encourage, the Impurity of the offending Person; for nothing can make it lawful to promote a Vice, or to be any way directly concerned in the helping it forward. This were to be a Bawd to the uncleannels of that Person, whom, with our Lives, we should fave from that Damnation, if we could. 7. But if Compliance and Cohabitation should, accidentally, render the guilty Person worse, against the Study and Design of the Innocent; neither he, nor she is in that Case obliged to give up their Right, or the Advantages they find in Cohabitation. It is certainly lawful to permit an Evil which I cannot help, whilft, by that Permission, I preserve my own Rights, or keep off the Wrongs that would otherwise befal me: But it is by no means lawful, for any Interest, either Spiritual or Temporal, to do an Evil, or fet it directly forward. It suchbrish the

Thus some Governments tolerate Fornication, and the publick Stews, to prevent the horrid Consequences of the Lusts of their young Men; which, because they cannot cure, they endeavour by this means to lessen and and divert: And tho' there be a great fault in fuch Governments, when many Vices which might be fubdued, are introduced and supposed necessary; yet, so far as the View is considered, if they were not avoidable, or were incurable by the Severity of Laws, by the Force of Reason, or the Power of Religion; it were then the only Charity that were left. But yet I cannot but think, that this Permission ought, upon no account, to have been allowed of. For it is a Snare to many who are under no fuch Necessities: it is a Reproach to the Laws and Religion of a Country, where fuch vile Nests of Impurity are fuffered; and the Necessity it felf is but fancied, and introduced by Custom and Example: Or if there were a real Neceffity; God, who best knows how to provide for the Needs of Mankind, hath appointed Marriage for a Remedy. But if any one, from the Intemperate Lusts of fome Italians, should urge the Insufficiency of Marriage to this End, fince Fornication is found not to be a Remedy; in this Case, I think, the Wheel, or the Gallies, hard Labour, or the Mines, should be applied to refrain the horrible Luxury and all van aniloob

But the Permissions of greater or less Uncleannesses are not to be made by publick. Authority; yet there may be particular Necessities in single Instances, for which no Remedy medy can possibly be provided; and then it may be lawful to divert the Sin upon a less Matter, when it cannot be taken off entirely. Thus, to save the Strangers from the Violation intended to them, and to keep the Citizens from breaking the Laws of Nature and Hospitality, righteous Lot offered his

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Daughters to the impure Sodomites.

But because This depends upon this Principle, that the lesser Evil, in respect of the greater, hath the Nature of Good, and therefore is to be preferred; here it may be asked, whether This can be lawful, or is not acting in opposition to the Apostle's Rule, that Evil is not to be done, that Good may come of it? This Enquiry may have great uses in the whole Life of Man, and therefore may not be unworthy of a stricter Examination.

As to the present Rule, it is certain, that this Permission is not a doing Evil, that Good may come of it. i. Because no Evil is at all permitted, when all Evil can be avoided. 2. No Man is to apply this Rule to his own Person; because he ought to have sufficient Reason and Strength of Mind, to oblige him to decline any Instance of Sin, about which he, at any time, hesitates. 3. And it is only to be advised to Others, by those who abominate all Sin, and have neither Pleasure, nor Interest in any. 4. Nor is it so properly a giving

giving leave to Sin, as the obstructing as much Sin as is possible. So that tho' it be not lawful to do Evil to a good End; yet it is lawful to suffer a lesser Evil, if it be absolutely necessary to avoid a greater, and to make the best of it that we can.

But as to the Point it self; no doubt, it is wholly unlawful to do Evil to a good End. St. Paul, with some Warmth, calls it Slander, when it was affirmed to be his Opinion, that it was lawful to do Evil, that Good may come. But how clear and certain soever this may be; yet since all Men, some time or other, do Evil that Good may come; I shall here observe to you the Matter of Fact, and endeavour to lay before you the proper

Measures of the Proposition.

If we look for Instances in Scripture, we shall find that Elias, to recover the People from Idolatry, appointed a Sacrifice to Baal, and got the Priests to invoke the Idol; which of it self was simply and absolutely Evil. And when David and his Soldiers were oppressed with Hunger, they eat the Shew Bread, which it was not lawful, but for the Priests, to eat. Thus Drunkenness, and even Pollution, have been considered as lawful, when they were used only for the recovery of Health. A Man is presumed lawfully to kill another, when he does it in defence of his own Life; and yet, this is certainly

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tainly doing Evil, that Good may come. Thus all Princes think they may lawfully enter into a War, in order to prevent the Dangers of an exorbitant Power in their Neighbours; which is no better than doing wrong, to prevent Milchief. Who will not tell a Lie to preserve the Life of his Friend, of his Child, or of a good and brave Man? So, a Judge exacts Oaths from the contrary Parties, tho' he knows the one must be perjured; but he has ordinarily no other way of coming at Truth, or keeping up the Solemnities of Law. Thus, lastly, we all apply to Tyrants and Usurpers for a Redress of Injuries: But if this be not doing Evil, that Good may come of it; then it is not Evil to prevail upon another to do an Act of usurped Power, or to own a Power which destroys That, to which we are bound by the Oath of God.

I do not give these Instances, in opposition to the Apostle's Rule; but to shew, that a great part of Mankind either act against it when they least think of it; or that some Things which seem to be Evil, are not Evil; and that I may lay before you the Measures of these Things, and fix the Case of Consci-

ence upon its proper Grounds.

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He who makes use of the Matter of a Sin already prepared, to which he gives no confent, and which he cannot help; doth not do Evil that Good may come. Thus Elias called upon the Priests of Baal to do what they were accustomed to do, that They might never do so again. He was not the Cause of a Sin, but only of those Circumstances of it, that it be done here and now; which therefore cannot be against the Apositle's Rule.

So, when we apply for Justice to the Power of a Tyrant, he will govern whether we will or or no, and the Sin will be acted, and perfifted in upon his own account; but when the evil matter is thus made ready, we may reap what Good we can from it. When an usurped Power is apt either to Justice, or Injustice, and we have no other way of procuring Justice, we may procure Justice from it, and we thereby do Good, without strengthening, or co-operating with the Evil: We only here determine an indifferent Agent to the better Part. The manner of getting Power, is wholly extrinsecal to the Ministration of it: That is altogether the Fault of the Ulurper; but This, which is our own Act, is wholly innocent. We only, in this Case, desire a Good, and, in order to it, use the evil Matter, which is of another's procuring. Befides, in Actions, the material part may be distinguished from the formal, or, the Act from the Pleasure arising from it. That may be altoaltogether indifferent, whilft This shall be wholly criminal. He who, by the Advice of his Phyficians, drinks till he is Sick, and Vomits, gives none of his Affection to the Pleasure of any thing which is forbidden; but takes it, as he takes a nauseous Draught, which would have the same Effect with Drink. But when the Act cannot be performed without a Sense of Pleasure, which is forbidden, then the End cannot fanctify it. And therefore, tho' to drink much for the Recovery of Health, may be lawful; yet I cannot come into the Opinion of those, who, for the same End, affert the other Instance of Pollution, to be likewise lawful; because That cannot be effected without a Sense of Pleasure wholly unlawful. And the same Objection will hold against drinking for our Health, if we find the Excess administers to us any Pleasure.

But, in short, the best Rule, for guiding and relieving the Mind of Man in the Doubts, which the various Accidents, Emergencies, Difficulties, and Necessities of his Condition, raise in it, is this: That whatsoever is forbidden by the Law, under which we stand, and considered in it self, is found Evil; whatsoever is certainly forbidden, not for any outward accidental Reasons, but for its natural and essential Repugnance to Reason and the Law of God; That may not be done,

done, or brought about for any End whatfoever.

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### CHAP. VI.

Of the scrupulous Conscience.

#### RULE I.

A Scruple is a great Trouble of Mind, proceeding from a little Motive, and a great Indisposition; by which the Conscience, tho sufficiently determined by proper Arguments, dares not proceed to Action; or if it do, it cannot rest.

Persons dare not eat for sear of Gluttony; they fear they shall sleep too much, and That robs them of their necessary Rest, troubles their Heads more, and then their Scruples increase. They repent when they have not sinned, and accuse themselves when they are not guilty; their very Virtues make them tremble, and they are afraid even in Innocence. They would by no means Sin, and yet know not how to avoid it. So that Scruple, in the restrained Sense of the word

in which I use it, is properly an Inquietude and Restlesness of Mind in Things done, or to be done, after the Doubts of Conscience

are determined and ended.

Very often it hath no Reason at all for its Inducement, but arises from an Indisposition of Body, Pusillanimity, Melancholy, a troubled Brain, Fear, Ignorance, false Notions of Things, strong Imagination, and weak Judgment; from any thing, in short, that can turn aside Reason into Irresolution. And therefore, this Disorder is most observable in Women and monastick Persons, in the sickly and timorous; and is often procured, by Excess in religious Exercises, indiscreet Fastings, by over-much Austerity, and too exact Discipline.

But because a Scruple is a Fear, or a light Reason against a sufficient Determination of the Understanding; it can oblige the Conscience to no other Work, than to get rid of the Trouble it receives from it. Which

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is to be done by the following Rules.

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A Conscience sufficiently instructed by its proper Arguments of Persuasion, may without Sin proceed to Action against the Scruple, and its weaker Arguings, and stronger Tremblings.

Against a doubting Conscience, a Man may not act, but against a scrupulous Conscience, he may. For a scrupulous Conscience does not take away the proper Determination of the Understanding. A Man's own Reason will easily convince him, that if, at the stated Times, he fasts such a number of Hours, and finds that the Abstemiousness impairs his Health, or endangers his Life; he may reasonably confine his Fast to a less number of Hours: But he is afraid to do That, which others, who are not under the fame Necessity, refuse to do. This Man discovers his Weakness indeed, but cannot lay aside his Assent to this Determination, that he may lawfully moderate his Abstinence, if it be necessary either to preserve, or restore the Health of his Body. To which we may add, that fince Scruples do fometimes wholly disconcert the Mind, weaken the Body, make Religion a Burthen, and introduce upon the whole Man a weariness and inquietude a stop to those terrible Evils, directly to throw away the scruples, and enter upon the Actions about which they were raised.

But this is to be admitted only when the Scruple is such, that it leaves the Conscience practically determined. For if the Scruple should so far prevail upon the Weakness of the Mind, as not to let it see the Force of those Reasons, which, had it been stronger, would have determined it; the Conscience loses its Rule, and its Security, and is herein reduced to an undiscerning, undetermined Faculty.

#### RULE III.

He that is troubled with Scruples, ought to rely upon the Judgment of a prudent Guide.

And the Reason is, because his own Understanding is troubled and distracted, the his Reason be never so clearly determined. And then he can but apply to the best Method of Cure, which, in his particular Case, is to be directed by an Understanding, which is equally determined, but not equally disordered, with his own.

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When a doubt is resolved in the entrance of an Action, we must judge of our Actions afterwards by the same Measures as before: For he that changes his Measures, turns his Doubt into a Scruple.

This is the Reason of this Rule; that which is fufficient for Satisfaction before, is fufficient for Peace afterwards. But to prevent any Scruples about our Actions, the furest way is to regulate them before we perform them, by these Cautions. 1. We are in the beginning to take care; that we do not mistake our Desires to do an Action, for a fufficient Warrant that we may do it. 2. We are not to be too easy in admitting every Argument to prove This or That Action lawful. For tho', in those Actions which relate to our eternal Interest, God demands no more of us, than to walk by the Meafures of a Man; yet we do not perform our Duty, if we act by the irrational Measures of a Child or a Fool. 3. We are to confider the Question separately from our Intereft; otherwise the Resolution upon it, cannot be either equitable or pure. But if more Arguments afterwards occur to us, than we were aware of in our first Enquiry; we are Na to

to remember that it was well enough at first, if it was probable enough; and for the rest, pray to God to accept you, if you did well and wifely, and to pardon you for what was done amiss, or negligently, or imperfectly.

#### RULE V.

A scrupulous Conscience is to be cured by Remedies proper to the Disease, and Remedies proper to the Man.

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The Remedies against the Scruple, are thefe. 1. Let the uneafy Man frequently confider the Goodness of God; that his Justice is Equity, and that his Judgments are in Mercy; and that he will never confider our Unhappiness as our Sin. 2. Let him be told, that all Laws, Humane and Divine, delight in kind and merciful Interpretations; and that God's Goodne so will not let him be extreme to mark what is done amis; for then, what Man could abide it? 3. Let him be put in Mind, that Charity is the fulfilling of the Law. He that proceeds according to the Reason of a Man, ought to have the Confidence of a Man: And This is Charity, that we behave cautiously and wifely, and follow the best Directions we can get. 4. The great Lines of Duty, by which God expects expects we should regulate our Conduct, are drawn with the utmost Plainness and Evidence. But if every Mistake about Those which are less conspicuous, were to consign a Man over to the Wrath of God; very few of the whole humane Race, would have it in their Power, to recommend themselves to his Fayour.

The properest Remedies for the scrupulous Man, are chiefly These. 1. Let him avoid all Excess in Mortifications and bodily Austerities; because by spoiling the Temper of the Body, they necessarily disorder the Mind, weaken its Capacity of Reasoning, and give it up wholly to the Power of its own Imagination. 2. Let him concern himfelf as little as possible, in such Questions as are rather nice and intricate, than important. They may embarrass the Understandings of the greatest Men, and afflict the Consciences of those who are weaker; but cannot either profit, or enlighten either of them. 3. Let him avoid those Companies, those Employments, and those Books from whence the Clouds arife. For the scrupulous are too eafily disquieted, if they find themselves full short of those fine Images of Virtue, which fome Men love to describe, that they may draw a fine Picture, which yet happens to be like no Body.

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### RULE OF CONSCIENCE.

Viz.

The Laws DIVINE and HUMANE, and all collateral Obligations.

### The Second BOOK.

### CHAP. I.

Of the Law of Nature in General.

#### RULE I.

The Law of Nature is the universal Law of the World, or the Law of Mankind, concerning common Needs to which we are inclined by Nature, invited by Confent, prompted by Reason, but is bound upon us only by the Commands of God.

THE Law of Nature, is an Expression very common in the Mouths of Men. They unanimously agree, that there is such a mate-

material Law, which, some way or other, is of the highest Obligation: But, there being no Digests or Tables of this Law, Men have not only differed about the Number of them, and even the Instances themselves. which have been given of it, but also about the Manner of proving and explaining Them. Whereas, if the Law of Nature were such a Thing as we generally suppose it, these Differences would be as strange and impossible, as that we should disagree about what is black, or what is yellow; or that we should enter into a Dispute about Rules to fignify when we desire, when we hope, or when we love. But my prefent Design, is not to enter into large Disputes about it; but only to observe all that arises from it, which at all affects the Conscience, and the Obligations it may lay the Conscience under. And in order to proceed more regularly, I shall dis stinctly consider the Parts of the Definition.

The Law of Nature ] The Right of Nature, and the Law of Nature, are usually confounded by Divines and Lawyers; but to very ill Purposes, to the throwing into Confusion and Disorder all the distinct Notices which might otherwise be taken from them. For the Right of Nature is no Law, neither is the Law of Nature a natural Right. The Right of Nature is a perfect, and uncontrolled Liberty of doing whatso-

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ever may please or secure me. But by Right here, we are to understand, not a legal, or positive, but a negative Right, such a Right as a Man has without a Law. So, by the Right of Nature, I may naturally enjoy, what I naturally desire: And it were an Absurdity to say, that we are naturally restrained, from That to which we have a natural Tendency. But this is not the Law of Nature, nor can it lay us under any Obligations.

And indeed, Nature her felf makes not a Law. Justice, I mean, that universal Virtue which contains all others within it, is a Virtue derived from fomething superinduced upon Nature. It is indeed thus far natural, as it is reasonable, and perfective of our Nature, and introductive of well being: But Nature alone did no more originally enjoin it, than it made matrimonial Chastity a natural Law, which could not be before Eve. and yet, before her, our Nature was perfect. Justice is properly a relative Virtue, and supposes Society and Compacts; for no Man can be faid to be unjust to himself, or to his own Goods which are absolutely in his own Power.

The Law of Nature is the univer fal Law of the World.] For there are some Laws of Nature which belong to all Men absolutely, who have any Notion of a God, or of good Manners;

Manners; particularly, those which belong to common Religion. Indeed, with regard to the Laws of Justice, the Law of Nature is more restrained; because, like the Laws of Religion, it does not only suppose the receiving Commands from God, but also some Intercourse with Man: And therefore, are more or less obligatory, in proportion to the different Force of the Obligations we receive from either. But the Law considered in its formal Reason, is the Law of all Mankind: For all Men are obliged by it in all Things.

The Law of Nature is the universal Law of the World, concerning some common Necessities.] This takes in the Matter and Body of natural Laws. Laws are for no other Reason so properly called natural, as for this, that they are Provisions made for the natural Necessities of Mankind: Such are, to do to others, as we would have others do to us: To perform Covenants: To secure Messengers of Peace, and Arbitrators: To be grateful to our Benefactors: And the the like. Without these, a Man cannot receive any Good, nor be secured from Evil.

For this Reason, it is not difficult to distinguish These, or the like Laws, from other Laws; because These proceed from the same Principle, are guarded by the same Penalties, written in the same Tables, are

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fuperinduced upon our Nature: And therefore, that these, and the like, are natural Laws, and the others are not, proceeds from their Relation to the subject Matter.

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which is profitable is made just; then That which is natural, becomes a Law; that is, when the Law tends to the same End, whither Nature tends; when the Want or the Desire is provided for by Obedience to a Law; then the Law is called natural. For fince all just and good Laws are profitable; they take their several Denominations of Civil, Religious, or Natural, from their serving the Ends, either of the Commonwealth,

of Religion, or of Nature.

The Law of Nature is the universal Law of the World, concerning some common Necessities, to which we are inclined by Nature.] That which is commonly called the Law of Nature, is nothing but a Consonancy to natural Reason, and Being. Some indeed take those only to be natural Laws, which relate to the common Appetites and Actions of Men and Brutes: But these are rather Indications of a common Necessity, Instinct, or Inclination, than of a Law of Nature. For Beasts enter upon the Action without a Law; and so might we, unless something, besides Nature, made it a Law to

to us. For Nature, or the natural Appetites in Them, and in Us, is just the same: but this Desire, being in Them, where a Law cannot be, therefore it may likewise be in us, without a Law. Beafts, with regard to their Actions, are no more capable of Law, than of Reason; their other Instincts and Inclinations, are no more than their Appetites to Meat, to which Nature indeed hath determined all, but laid no Obligations upon any. So that those Arguments to commonly drawn from the Gratitude, the Fidelity, the Chastity of Brutes, to perfuade Men from the contrary Vices, are infinitely uncertain and fallacious. It might as well be faid, that it is as much against the Law of Nature to be drunk, as to be incestuous: because Horses will drink no more than will just quench their Thirst.

This Distinction is the more necessary, because it may be of use against the Scruples of some Persons, in things wherein they ought to be consident. Several of the ancient Fathers, having observed, that Beasts once impregnated, abstain from Coition, have said, that they abstain in Consequence of the Law of Nature; but, only for this Reason, to impose upon Men a Law to do so too, would be very weak and dangerous. A Brute hath no Perception of lawful or unlawful, nor can he properly be said to do

an Injury, because he is incapable of a Law. And if it be unreasonable, to charge the Actions of Beasts with any Obliquity, because they are not under the Conduct of Reason; it must be as absurd to make the Law of Nature, something common to them and us.

The Law of Nature is the universal Law of the World, concerning fome common Necessities, to which we are inclined by Nature, invited by Confent. The Confent of Nations, or, publick Fame, among All, or the wifest Nations, is a strong Character of Decency, or Indecency, and a probable Indication of the Law of Nature. It feems not to be a vain Noise when many Nations join their Voices in the Applaufe, or Detestation of an Action; but it rather looks, as if it were derived from fome common Principle, which may be supposed to be either Nature, or Contract: And then, as in the first Case, they would be reasonable, so in the other, they are directly obligatory.

But yet, this Consent of Nations rather tells us, what we may do, than what we must do: It being more probable, that all Nations will not consent to an unnatural Thing, that is, will not universally do Violence to Nature; than that, what soever they commonly act, should be a necessary Law, and the Measures of Nature, or the Mark

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of her Obligations. And it is still more probable, that the consent of Nations may more properly be used as a Corroborative to a Persuasion, or a kind of Actions, than as the surface forme Nations so wholly barbarous and unpolished, that, were we to lay any stress upon their Behaviour, we should be brought to bely and abuse the fair and generous Inclinations and Opinions of humane Nature. When therefore, we would argue from the Law of Nations, we are to take into the Account, only Those who are subject to Laws, the well-mannered people only.

And even here, we may discover an uncertainty in the Argument. For, to the Greeks, all others were barbarous. To the Romans, all were barbarous, but the Greeks and Themfelves. And to the Jews, all but themselves were Heathens; which, with Them, fignified much the fame Thing, or perhaps, formething worfe. The Force of Custom likewife renders this Argument less conclusive. Prescription and long Practice made the Egyptians allow of Thefts; and the wifer Lacedemonians a fober and severe People, instructed their Youth to steal, not to humour their Avarice, nor to enrich Themselves, but to encourage them to fight the better, by plundering well. And Solinus tells us of the Cap. 43. Garamantici, a whole People, that they

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knew no Marriages; and therefore their Children, not being able to guess at their Fathers,
owned their Mothers only. And indeed the
old World did allow of such wile Practices,
and contracted such base unworthy Customs,
that they lest it impossible to judge of the
Laws of Nature by the Consent of Nations.

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The Law of Nature is the universal Law of the World, concerning fome common Necessities, to which we are inclined by Nature, invited by Consent, prompted by Reafon. ] Tully defines the Law of Nature to be vera Ratio Natura congruens, diffusa in Omnes, constans, sempiterna. Right Reafon, which is confonant to Nature, and in every Man is constantly and perpetually the same, is the Law of Nature. But this is not exactly true Right Reason is indeed the Instrument of using the Law of Nature, and is That, by which, in Conjunction with the Conscience, which is also Reason, we are determined to a Choice and Profecution of it our felves, or to an Inclination of obeying the obliging Power. But Reason is not the Law it felf, nor it's Measure. No Man can be fure that a Thing is a Law of Nature, because it appears to him highly reasonable; neither if it were so indeed, is it therefore a Law. For it is very reasonable that eve-Man should chuse his own Wife, because his Interest Interest is most nearly concerned in the Choice; that every Man should suffer, as much Evil as he does; that a Man be not punished for Evils he cannot help; that every Man should suffer for his own Fault, and no Man, for the Crime of another: And yet these are not Laws in all places where they are reasonable.

But besides This, Reason varies like the Colours of a Dove's Neck. It looks otherwife to me, than to you, who do not view it in just the same Light that I do: And if we enquire after the Law of Nature by the Rules of our Reason; our Determinations will be as uncertain as the Discourses of the Vulgar, or the Dreams of a disturbed Imagination. And, in Fact, very wife and great Men, as far as appears to us from their Writings, or their Characters, have believed the worst of Crimes to be innocent, and to have in them no natural Turpitude. Theo. dorus allowed of Sacrilege; and fo do Thoufands, who at this Day call themselves Chriflians. Plato permitted Adultery and Community of Wives; fo likewife did Socrates and Cato. Zeno and Chrysippus approved of Incest; fo did the Persians. So that we may well fay, with Socrates; when we hear the word Silver or Iron pronounced, all who speak the same Language, understand the same thing by it; but when we mention Good or Evil, we are immediately differentiated into various Apprehensions, and not only differ from one another, but even from our selves.

But the last Clause of the Rule, will finish this whole Question. The Law of Nature is the universal Law of the World, concerning some common Necessities, to which we are inclined by Nature, invited by Confent, prompted by Reason, bound upon us by the Command of God. When God made Man a free Agent, he naturally gave him a Power to do all he could defire: And all That is, jus Naturale, a natural Right, or Power. But the Law was superinduced upon this Right. For Right is properly Liberty, but Law is a Fetter. This is the Right of Nature, to be Free, subject to no Law, to do absolutely any thing that pleases us. Now whatsoever is a Law and Restraint to this natural Right, must be superinduced upon it. Nature her felf would never incline to restrain it self, nor had any thing Power to do it, but God who is the Lord of Nature. The Law of Nature is a Copy of the Wifdom and Will of God, written in the Tables of our Minds: But those Tables, like Moses's, are broke, by letting them fall out of our Hands, on occasion of the evil Manners of the World: But God wrote them again for us, as he did for him, by his Spirit, more

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more or less, in all Ages of the World, by the Arts of Instruction, and secret Insinuation, and by all the ways adapted to a reasonable Nature; till the *Inclination* came up to a firm *Belief*, and then became a

God therefore is our Lawgiver, and hath appointed our Hearts to be the Tables of the Laws of Nature, that they might be always under our Eye, legible and clear. It does not indeed become a Law only for being placed there; but God first made it a Law, and then fixed it there for our use. And tho' great numbers of Mankind never had any entercourse with God as a Legislator, but only That which they have by means of their Conscience; that is, they never heard their God speak either by Prophecy or Revelation, or had forgot the Tradition of their Fathers; yet when the Almighty, by fecret, indifcernible ways, hath written a Proposition there, and the Man does believe a Thing to be Good or Evil; it is certainly true, that God is his Lawgiver, because he only is Lord of his Conscience: But it is also true, that he becomes obliged to God by an Act of his own Conscience. And whatever were the occasion that his Conscience was wrought upon, tho' it were only a Fancy or a Fear; yet if it brings the Conscience to the Notice and Obedience of a natural

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the greater and more forcible are we to suppose the Essicacy of the principal Agent. The putting it into the Conscience, however That be done, is a sufficient Promulgation of a Law; but Nature alone never does it. The express Voice of God, Tradition, the Prophets, Contract, Providence, Education, and all other kinds of Insluence from God, and Correspondence with Men, have their share in this Essect; but it becomes a Law, only by the Sanction of God's Au-

thority.

As for the particular Laws of Nature, which only, are properly called Laws; we are to look for no other System or Collection of them, than That we find in the express Laws of God, which concern Morality; fuch as are contained in the moral Law of Mofes, and in the Religion of Jesus Christ. For these are, in some proportion, generally given to all Mankind. But fince it is very necessary that This be well understood, because it establishes many Certainties in the Matter of Conscience, and eases us of the difficulty of finding out a particular System of natural Laws, the enquiry after which, hath rather filled the World with Disputes, than produced any Certainty; I shall endeavour to obviate the great Objection which is made against this Affertion.

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Since the Christian Religion, say some, is new in respect of Nature; since it has super-induced some things upon Nature, and rescinded some of her Rights, and laid a Restraint upon her Liberty; it will seem impossible, that the Christian Religion should be a Body of the Laws of Nature, because the Law of Nature is prime and eternal, which the Christian Religion seems not to be.

Now to this it may be answered; 1. That it is evident, that all those Laws, which any Men call the Law of Nature, are actually contained in the Books of the New Testament. All that is effentially good, is there; all that can make the World happy, is there; all that relates to every Man's Duty, is there; all the inffruments of Happiness, and the Conveyance of our great Hopes, is there; but what there can be more in the Law of Nature, which has not a necessary Connection, with what has been here mentioned; I have not been raught, nor can I imagine or understand. But, 2. It is weak to suppose, that all the Instances of the Law of Nature, must be as prime as Nature her self; because they neither are fo prime, nor fo lafting, but are, in some Cases, alterable by God, or by Men. This may feem a new manner of fpeaking; but the Thing is notwithstanding absolutely certain. For when God ordered Abraham

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Abraham to kill his Son, and the Israelites to rob the Egyptians of their Goods; he commanded them to break an Instance of the natural Law. He made it necessary that Cain should marry his Sister; and each of those Laws of Nature, which did suppose, Liberty and Indistinction of Possessions, are entirely altered, when Dominion, Servitude, and Propriety came into the World: And the Laws of Nature which we observe in Peace, do not oblige us in time of War.

And therefore it is not hard to comprehend, that the Christian Religion should superinduce fome Excellencies and Perfections upon humane Nature, and lay Restraint upon the first natural Laws; those, I mean, which, before this last Period of the World, were Laws of Nature. Herein God used but his own Right. To repel Force by Force, was originally but a Right of Nature; but afterwards it became a Law, that Men might do it; God expressly gave them leave. And tho', That be not properly a Law, which neither commands, nor forbids, but only gives leave; yet when God had charged Men not to do Violence, and to enforce the Law, gave Permission to any Man to punish an unjust Enemy that would do him mischief; it may be called a Law, in a lower Sense, as it became lawful by a Decree passed in the Court of Heaven.

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In short; if we believe Jesus Christ to be our Lawgiver, and that he hath revealed to us all his Father's Will, as he is faid to have done; we need look no farther for Tables of the Law of Nature, but confider those only as fuch, which bind us as Christians. All the Laws of Christ relating to moral Actions, are the Laws of Nature: And all the Laws of Nature, which any wife Nation ever believed to be fuch, are either abolished by God, or else are explained and prescribed by Fesus Christ. So that Christianity is a compleat System of all the Laws of Nature, of all the Will, of all the Commandments of God. In those things wherein Christianity hath not interposed, we have left us a natural Liberty, or permissive Right, unless, by some kind of Contract or Agreement, we have laid our felves under Restraint.

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The Law of Nature is the Foundation of all Laws, and the Measure of their Obligation.

There is the same Reason, the same Rules and Measures, for all good Laws, and all Justice. Laws are therefore good, because they are prositable; and just, because they are measured by the common Rules of O 3 Justice;

Fustice; and are necessary, because they are bound upon us by God, either mediately, or immediately. The Reasons of all wife Laws in Commonwealths, arise from the Analogy they bear to Nature, to the clearest Notions of Justice, common Advantage, and natural So that every wife civil Law, Necessity. is nothing but a Confequence of the natural Law, in respect of its Formality, Reasonableness, and Obligation. All Laws of Manners are likewise Laws of Nature: For there can be but one Justice, and one Honesty in the World. And therefore in observing the Laws of Nature, the Good of every Society, and of every particular Man is comprised: And in every Civil Constitution formed upon the Plan of That, there is only something super-added, not to the Reasonableness or Justice of the Law, but only, in regard to fome Circumstances of it.

But fince the Law of Christianity comprehends all the Law of Nature, and is now the only Law by which we are primarily obliged; it is the first and adequate Rule and Measure of Conscience, and the Explication of all its Precepts, will be a full Institution of it.

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The first and greatest Band of the Law of Nature, is Fear of Punishment.

Fear and Shame are the Restraints which Nature hath provided for every Sin. Now to all Laws there must be some Punishment annexed, the Fear of which may be able to deter Men from acting against the Law; but This can never be, where we do not fear an Evil in Trangressing, greater than the Pleafure we find in the Sin. Hence it is, that God hath established a Court within us, a severe Judge, who will not spare; a wife Discerner, who cannot be deceived; an exact Remembrancer, who forgets no flagrant Crimes; and a Witness too just to be suborn-The Stings of Conscience, and Dread of the Divine Vengeance, is the Evil which naturally restrains us. It becomes the greatest Restraint, by being the greatest Evil we can fall under; and by being natural and unavoidable. So that it is not only lawful to abstain from Evil for fear of Punishment; but it is likewise natural and necessary. is not bare dread of Discovery and Civil Punishments, which is appointed to restrain wicked Actions; but fuch an Apprehension of future Punishment as God hath made natural

as, the Fear of God's Displeasure, and the Destruction of our Nature and our Happiness, to which, the natural Love of our selves, and the desire of our own Preservation, oblige us to have a strong and invincible

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There is indeed another kind of Fear, which has its Force upon those Men who are not affected with the Fear of future Punishments; and That is, the Civil Sanctions of natural Laws. But to do Good, in order to avoid Punishment, in this Sense, is to do Good only whilft I am observed, or whilft I am constrained. The Civil Laws were not originally defigned for good Men, who are restrained upon better and more rational Principles; but for the Unjust, the Oppreffors, the Infolent, who contemn the Motives which lay Restraint upon Men of Virtue. Not but that even wile and good Men have a Fear in them, which is an Instrument of Virtue and Religion; but it is a Fear of God, not of the Magistrate; a Fear that is natural, that arises from the natural Notices of Things; a Fear of doing a base Action; or a dread of becoming a Fool, or a vile irrational Being. The Happiness and Perfection of Men were but poorly provided for, if those Vices which elude the Law and the Judge, were not terribly punished by some natural

natural Fears and Apprehensions. But this Fear, in the Minds of good Men, proceeds from a natural Love of Virtue, and their own Persection, and from the Acknowledgment of God's Omniscience, his Justice, and his Goodness.

### RULE IV.

The second Band of Virtue is Love, and its proper and consequent Deliciousness.

This is not wholly natural, but is fometimes the Effect of Philosophy and Religion, of virtuous and fevere Instructions, to do that for Love, and withour Constraint, which weak, or guilty Minds commonly do for Fear of Laws. When, I fay, This is not natural, my meaning is, that tho' it be agreeable to Nature, yet it is not primarily introduced by it, without a Tutor, whose Nature forbids Injustice, but enjoins Justice accidentally only, and in confideration of certain Circumstances. Thus, to do Injustice, is always a Sin; but it is not always a Sin not to do Justice. For a Man may lay aside the Person of a Judge, a Trustee, or a Delegate: But They who are habitually just, finding the Rewards of Reputation, and the Pleasure of being eased from the Tortures of an evil Concience, infenfibly grow fo far in love with Justice, as to imagine they love it for its own sake. But as this Persuasion may raise scruples in the Mind, or fill it with Opinions a little too nice; it may not be improper to bestow a Reslection or two upon it.

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Antigonus Sochæus, an old Jew, was famed for faying, that They are not Servants, who serve their Lord in prospect of a Reward from them; but they only, who serve without any Consideration of Wages, or Recompence. Let the Fear of God be upon you. Baithus and Sadoc, his Disciples, from whom arose the Sect of the Sadduces, not well understanding him, from hence took upon them to deny the Resurrection, and Rewards after this Life. And indeed, fuch Expressions as these, may be easily abused. But it is impossible a Man should perform great Things, or fuffer nobly, without a View to some Reward; and because much of Virtue lies in fuffering Evils, Virtue it felf is not fo properly a Blessing, as the Way to a Blessing. That Man does Things like a Fool, who does them for no End; and if he does not chuse a good End, he is still worse. Virtue would indeed be very unreasonably proposed to us, if we were, without any profpect of Reward, to chuse, and support the Pressures it often lays us under. If in this Life only we had hope, the Pleasures of Senic

Sense were properer, and more rational Objects of our Wilhes, than to make our selves Miserable, for the sake of being Good: And it is absolutely impossible, that Men should

be virtuous only upon this View.

A good Man may, in a Sense, be said to love Virtue for Virtue's sake, when he so habitually loves and practises it, as to perform several Instances of it, without a direct View to a Recompence: But the this or that Instance of it be exerted without any Eye to a Reward, it is yet only in Consequence of the Habit, which originally derived its Strength from the Hopes of Recom-

pence.

Virtue is to the Soul, what beautiful Colours are to the Eyes, or delicious Savours to the Tongue. God hath exactly proportioned it to all the noble Ends, to all the worthy Defires of Man, and made it the proper Instrument of their Happiness. All its Beauties, all its Effects, all that renders it amiable, is indeed part of its Reward. To say therefore, that a Man can love Virtue without any prospect of a Reward, is only to say, that a Man may love it without any Inducement, or that his Affections may be moved without any Motive.

To love Virtue therefore for Virtue's fake only, is fo far from being the Honour of a good and perfect Man; that it is, if it pro-

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ceeds no farther, the Character even of a wicked Man: For it amounts to no more than this, that the *Understanding* is convinced of the Worthiness of it.

So that, tho' it be not allowed to good Men to be influenced to Virtue, purely from the worldly Regards of Praise, Glory, Riches, Power, or the like; yet, by those who know any thing of the Nature of Things, even the best Men will be allowed to have any habitual Regard to any Recompence their God has given them hopes of. So Moses despised to be called the Son of Pharaoh's Daughter, because he had an Eye to the Recompence of the Reward. So those brave Persons reckoned up by St. Paul in the eleventh Chapter of the Hebrews, all died in the Faith, not having received the Promises. And our bleffed Lord himfelf, endured the Cross, and despised the Shame; but it was for the Glory that was fet before him.

The Refult is This; tho' the Fear of God be implanted in Nature, and in the Confcience; yet the Expectation of Reward is rather put into us, than born with us; it is

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Elo succession being the Honour of a good and perfect Man ; that it is not to the

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The Imperfections of some Provisions in Civil Laws, are supplied by the natural Obligation remaining upon Persons, civilly incapable.

Laws make Provision for all the Cases which can be foreseen; yet some Things will emerge which cannot be foreseen: So that no humane Constitution can reach all the different Cases that may arise. Here Nature, the common Parent of all just and necessary Obligations, takes the Case into her Protection. This happens in many Cases.

Humane Laws give Measures of Things generally fitted to the Occasions of Men; but fometimes they are not. Young Perfons, at fuch an Age, are made capable of entering into profitable Contracts; at another Age, of making Contracts that are hazardous, and they are obliged to stand to them, be the Consequence never so fatal. At one Age they may marry; at another, contract a Debt: At This Age, they may make a Will; at That, they are liable to capital Punishments. But in some, whose Malice and Wit are of a more early Growth, and the Sense of their Advantages, strong and lively; the Contracts which they make, the Actions which clared

which they perform, and the Part which they chuse, is really made, or done, or chosen; tho' the Civil Laws, in regard to their Youth, does not oblige them to fland to it: And yet if they can chuse, they are naturally obliged. The Civil Law can provide only for the common Exigencies of Men: but the Laws of God make Provision not only for the general, but for the particular Cases which may arise. God and our Conscience can take exact account of every fuch Cafe. The Fullness therefore of his Law, is to make up for the Deficiencies of the other. Every Instance of Duty, is, in Fact, an Instance of Obedience to God; and every one who can hope, or fear, is obliged to this Obedience. There was not at that time among the Romans, any civil Conftitution against Rapes; and yet Tarquin ought not to have committed a Rape, because there was an eternal Law against it. He could not but know the Action was criminal, and irrational, and directly opposite to those Principles by which he ought to govern himfelf.

So, in Case of clandestine Contracts, where both Parties are concerned; tho' all Christian Countries have made severe Laws against them; yet if the Contract be once made, in some places, they are thought valid; in others, null and void. When they are declared

clared pull, Nature is overborn by that Decision, and the Parties are warranted to do a Mischief. If a Man and a Woman clandestinely enter into a Contract of Marriage, and the Man repent his Bargain; where shall the Woman be relieved? The Law of the Church forbids it; and, if the complains, will pumish her for doing it. It does not fall under the Notice of the Civil Law, for it cannot legally be proved: If it be declared null, a Law of Nature is rescinded, and so nothing left to hold the Man to Justice. The nulling therefore fuch a Contract, besides that it is against the Law of Nature, is a Remedy that deftroys the Patient. The Laws may forbid the doing it, but cannot rescind it when it is done. For the Civil Constitution is less than the Natural, and Convenience is of less moment than Conscience, and Man is infinitely beneath God.

### RULE VI.

Sins against the Law of Nature are greater or less, not by that Proportion, but by the greatness of the Matter, and the evil Consequent of the Malice of the Sinner.

The Design of this Rule is to remove an Error, which highly abuses the Persuasions of Men in many Cases of Conscience, as it inclines

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Men to think, that They are the worst Sins, which are unnatural; or that to Sin against Nature, is the highest Aggravation of Sin in the World. Here therefore we are to obferve; that all Sins against Nature, are no more detestable than all Sins against God. And as all Sins, are in themselves, against God; fo are they, some way or other, against Nature too. For the Reason upon which I pronounce any Action to be a Sin, is that Reason, which is common to all wife Men, and consequently must be also natural: Not that it is wholly taught us without the help of Revelation, or Institution; but that it is fuch, as all Men fo taught, find to be, in the Nature of Things, truly reafonable.

All voluntary Pollutions are Offences against Nature; because they are the Gratifications of Lust, in fuch ways as Nature never intended: But they are not therefore all of them, worse than Adultery or Fornication. For tho' all fuch Pollutions are contrary to the Order and Provisions of Nature; yet in some of them, there is not such a complication of Guilt, as there is in Fornication: Which, tho' it be against Nature too, inasmuch as it dishonours the Body, yet it is expressly forbidden in the Commandment, whilst some of the others, are only confequentially forbidden. Besides, Fornication always inclines

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always supposes the Guilt of two Persons, which the other does not always, and is generally acted with Circumstances infinitely more vile, and more pernicious.

The breach of a Commandment is a surer Rule to judge of Sins, than the acting in opposition to a natural Reason. For there are many Things unreasonable, which are not unlawful; and there are some things, which, in some Circumstances, are reasonable, and yet, in the Law, irregular and forbidden. Such are all those Things, which are permitted, because of the hardness of our Hearts. Such was Polygamy to the Patriarchs and to the Jews. In such things as these, the Commandment, and nothing else, is the Measure of Right and Wrong.

### RULE VII.

Actions which are forbidden by the Law of Nature, either for Defect of Power, or for the Incapacity of the Matter, are not only unlawful, but also void.

This holds in Contracts, in Acts of Donation, in Vows, and the like. He who cannot give, or he who cannot be given, can neither contract, nor be contracted with. A Man desirous of Children, contracts himself to one whom he took to be a Woman, but P

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found to be an Eunuch, and consequently incapable of entering into such a Contract. The Eunuch did ill in contracting, but That was all; for the Contract was void by the

Incapacity of the Person.

Upon this Account, the Lawyers, among the Reasons for annulling Marriages, reckon Error Persona, the Mistakes of the Perfon, to be one: Tho' certainly, if we speak of natural Nullities, this ought not to extend beyond mere natural Incapacities. Therefore, if I contract my felf to a Person whom I take to be a Lady, and fhe proves a Servant, or of mean Birth; tho' she did ill in deceiving me, yet if she is naturally capable of performing her part of the Contract, the Contract is not naturally void. Whether or no it may be void upon a civil Account, is not now the Question: But it can never be made void by the Law of Nature, but when, by Nature, it cannot be confummated. Indeed, when a Man enters into a Contract upon certain Conditions, the Contract is void, if the Conditions are not fulfilled: But then he can contract only for fuch Things as are actual and present, but not for such as are altogether future, and contingent. He may contract with a Woman, upon Condition her Fortune be really fo much; but not upon Condition, that she

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Another natural Cause of Invalidity, is, when a Contract is made by him, who had no Power naturally to make it. This happens in Case of Precontracts; unless the Man is freed from them, by the non Performance of Conditions expressly stipulated, and possible to be performed. But where This is not the Case, he hath given up all his Power in this Point, and cannot naturally testume it.

## numanc Laws only. For if a Man have en-

When an Act is forbidden by the Law of Nature, for the Turpitude and Indecency that it hath in the Matter of the Action; the Act is also void, when the Turpitude remains, or hath a perpetual Cause.

For the Perlons being Both by make

He who contracts a Marriage with his Father's Wife, or any Marriage, in which every elicite Act is a new Sin, did not only fin in entering into the Contract, but the Marriage is void by the Law of Nature. And the Reason is plain; for no Man can bind himself to Sin. And here is likewise a Defect of Power; for no Man can bind himself against God: And the Law of Nature, whose chief Rule is, to do Good, and avoid P 2

Evil, cannot enforce an Act which is done in opposition to her first and most important Principle. It were an Absurdity to suppose, that Nature could give a Permission to Sin against Nature; for then the same thing would be agreeable, and not agreeable, to Nature.

But this is to be understood only in Things which are forbidden by the Law of Nature, the eternal and immutable Law of God, or That Law of his, which is only positive; but it does not hold in Things forbidden by humane Laws only. For if a Man have entered into a Contract against an humane Law, the Contract is established by a divine Law, which is more forcible and binding than That which is merely bumane. The Law of the Church of Rome forbids some Per-Ions to enter into Contracts of Marriage; and yet, if they do, the Contract is binding: For the Persons being both by natural and divine Law, capable of contracting; they only finned who contracted against the Law, and they finned only in That one Action; for the subsequent Actions being no Sins, cannot be invalidated. the Realon is plain; for no Man can bind

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The Law of Nature can be dispensed with, by the divine Power.

And here we are to observe, in the first place, that God's Dispensations differ very much from humane Dispensations. As he is Supreme Lawgiver, he can cancel Those, and impose These, just as he pleases. By this Power, he can free particular Persons, from personal Obligations; and when he does, the Law preserving its Power over other Persons, in other Cases; this is proper-

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In divine Dispensations God himself gives the Cause of Them; for his Laws are fo wifely contrived, and fo exactly fitted to all Cases and Emergencies, that there cannot arise any new Case, which God did not foresee: But because he hath Ends of Providence, of Justice, of Goodness, or Power to serve; he often introduces new Causes of Things, and then permits Men to carry on his Defigns, by fuch means, as, without fuch Permission, would be unlawful. Whereas, in humane Dispensations, the Cause of them is prepared beforehand, not by the Lawgiver, but by accidental, unavoidable Deficiencies. God does not permit any Man to break

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break a natural Law, as long as he keeps that natural Law in its Force and Reason; but because Actions, generally forbidden by the Law of Nature, may, when the Force and Reason of it, in this or that Instance, are less obliging, be commanded by God to be done, and to become lawful by a temporary Command, tho' they were originally, and at their first Sanction, unlawful: This is directly and properly a Dispensing with Men in particular Obligations to the Law of Nature. But tho' this may happen as often as God pleases, yet it happens as seldom as a Mira-This, indeed, is frequently the Case of humane Laws; and therefore they may be frequently dispensed with.

But because some Doctors of the Law have contended, that God cannot dispense with natural Laws in his Capacity of Law-giver, but only as he is Lord and Judge; I shall give Instances to shew, that he hath actually dispensed with them, in each Capacity. 1. That the Marriage of one Man and one Woman is in Consequence of a Law of Nature, appears from the Institution of Marriage, and from our Saviour's reducing it to its original Sanction. If any thing be a Law of Nature, this feems to be fo, from the confent of all Men. And yet Mofes allowed of Divorces; and God, and Moses his Servant, permitted Polygamy, when there was no change

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change of the Case, no Necessity, no apparent Reason for it, but only that Men had a mind to it. For if at first, when there feemed to be the greater Necessity for the Plurality of Wives, in order to the Peopling the World, the Man had but one Wifegiven him; then, as the World grew more populous, that Necessity could the less be pretended. So that, to dispense with a Plurality of Wives, when the best Reason for it was altogether ceased, is properly an Act of Jurisdiction. Tho', by the way, I must own, that to distinguish between the Power of a Judge, or Lord, or Law-giver, when they are equally supreme, is to make a Distinction without a Difference. But the way in which the Schools have managed this Argument, has obliged me to it. So again, that Brother and Sifter are not to marry, feems to be a Law of Nature: But yet God dispensed with it, in the Case of Cain and his Sister. He made it necessary to be so; and yet he was not obliged to make it necessary; for when he created one Man and one Woman, he might have created as many as he had pleased. That which would be Incest in others, was not so in him. He only did what God would have him do: But whether this be Jurisdiction or Dominion, let him who is able, determine. noth Bays ten sagu

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But in some Things God hath dispensed, in Right of Dominion only. As he did in the Matter of the fixth Commandment, when he commanded Abraham to slay his Son. God was certainly Lord of Isaac's Life, and might therefore justly take it away himself: But when he commanded Abraham to do it, he dispensed with him, in that Instance, from observing the Commandment. God, indeed, in Right of his Dominion, made the Caufe for the Dispensation; but yet it was a direct Dispensation; as much as it would be, if in Right of his Dominion, God should resolve to take away the Lives of a whole Nation, and in order to it, give a general Permission to Mankind, to destroy all of that Nation, as they had Inclination or opportunity to do it. For to permit the doing That, which, without Permission, were to Sin against the Law of Nature; is, in a proper Sense, a Dispen-Sation.

The other way of Dispensing, is in the applying the Power of a Judge to a particular Person or Community, and by way of Punishment, to take from him, what cannot be taken from him but by a supreme Power. Thus, it is a Law of Nature, that we should do as we would be done by. But even in This, God dispensed with the Children of Israel. They might not exact from each other exorbitant Usury, but from Strangers

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That God therefore, can dispense with the Laws of Nature, is plain and evident: But tho' it be hard to fay how far this Dispenfation can reach, and to what Particulars it may extend, because God's Ways are unfearchable, and his Power not to be comprehended by us; yet fince our Saviour hath given the World a perfect System of the natural Law, and hath obtained to himfelf an everlasting Kingdom, fo that his Law must be perpetual, and God will always govern Mankind by it: By the eternal Reasonableness of this Law, we may be able to fay, what is indifpenfable, and what is not. And the Measure by which we are to judge in this Point, is this: Every Matter, from which the Cause of the Obligation can be taken away, is dispensable.

But if it should be asked, what Relation this Enquiry hath to the Affairs of Conscience; the following Reflections, arifing from

it, may ferve for an Answer.

1. Hence we may learn, that our Duty to God is Supreme; that it is due to him only; that it cannot be lessened, and ought upon no Account to be extinguished; for his Will is the only Measure of our Obedience. Our Reason, our Nature, our Affecti-100

ons, our Interest, our Virtue, our Religion, ought to be entirely subject to God. And all the Good which is in our Actions, or our Defires, arises from the Conformity of our Behaviour to the Divine Will and Law. We are to consider the holy Scriptures of the New Testament, as the Light of our Eyes, and the furest Guide of our Consciences in all the great Lines of Duty; for there our bleffed Lord hath fully registered all the natural and necessary Obligations of Men to God; and to one another. All the Precepts of Christ are perfective of our Nature, and are the Instruments of all the true Happiness we are capable of. And since it hath pleased God, by his holy Son, to pronounce this Will of his to be lasting, and never to be changed by any future Lawgiver; we are to rest here, and affure our selves, that no Power, less than God's, can alter any thing of This; and that by this Law we shall stand or fall in the severe Scrutiny at the last Day. To a find white he will

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The Law of Nature cannot be dispensed with, by any humane Power.

The Laws of Nature deriving their Force and Obligation from the Laws of God, cannot not be dispensed with by a Power inserior to That, which sirst gave them their Sanction: So that they cannot be dispensed with but by God himself. But because wise Men have publickly afferted, that by the Law of Nations, and the Civil Laws, something may be taken away from the Law of Nature; we are to consider what they meant by those words; for we are not to suppose that wise Men would allow This, in any Case, to be lawful, unless they had observed, in some Cases, that it was lawful. The following Remarks will let us into all they mean.

1. Whatsoever is forbidden by the Law of Nature, cannot be allowed of by the Civil Law. For where a fuperior Power hath already interposed, a lower Power has no Authority. 2. Whatsoever is commanded by the Law of Nature, is not to be forbidden by the Civil Law. For here God is the Lawgiver; who never fets up any Authority in opposition to his own, nor allows any Man to disobey him. 3. That which the Law of Nature has permitted, may be made a Civil Law, or by a Civil Law, may be forbidden. For those Things, which, in Morality, we call indifferent; in Nature, we call Rights, or those Things which are not naturally under the Restraint of Laws. These Rights the Civil Law may restrain, because the free use of them, in some Circumstances, might be

be very pernicious. Such would be an uncontrolled use of the natural Rights of Liberty, Community, Power of Revenge, of taking any Thing, or killing the Man who injures me. 4. That which is only confirmed by the Law of Nature, may be dispensed with by the Civil Power. One Man owes another a large Sum of Money, and by the natural Law of Justice, is obliged to pay him. But the Creditor, being under no natural Obligation to exact the Payment, is at Liberty, if he pleases, to forgive him the Debt: And if he does forgive him, tho' the other is obliged by a natural Law to pay him, yet he is difpenfed with by the private Power of the Creditor. So likewife, when the Obligation is conditional, if the Condition upon which it was entered into, justly fails; the Obligation, which derived its Power from the Law of Nature, may be rescinded or difpenfed with For if a natural Law could oblige longer, than that Reason lasts, for which it did oblige; we must then, very abfurdly suppose, that a natural Law could be unreasonable. 5. The Civil Law can extrinfecally change the natural Law. Indeed, when natural Laws are confidered in those prime Inftances, where the Matter is unchangeable; there the Law of Nature cannot be altered but by the Lord of Nature But when the natural Laws are confidered in a Mat2 Matter that can be changed, and do pre-Suppose Contract, Cession, Condition, any Act of Will, or the like, whose Cause is not perpetual; the Law here, obliges by the Condition of the Matter of it. Thus we fay, God's Gifts are without Repentance, that his Love never fails, and that his Promifes continue for ever; and yet he refumes his Gifts, withdraws his Love, and will not give what he had promifed: But it is not because he changes in himself, but because the Subjects of his Love and of his Promifes are changed. Now hence may appear the Weakness and Impiety of ascribing to the Bishop of Rome, the Power of dispensing in the natural Law. For fince the Rules of Nature are unchangeable and eternal, the Laws of it being formed upon these Rules, are also eternal, only in those Cases where the Matter of them is, or can be, changed. Now if the Matter of them be in the prime Instances. fuch as the Conjunction of Sexes, Relation between Parents and Children, and the like: the Law continues the same for ever, unless God, by fome miraculous or extraordinary Act change the Matter of it; and then indeed, the fame Power that altered the Matter, might alter the Law too. Sometimes indeed the Matter of a Law changes of it felf, or is changed to our Hand, as it happens in Conditional Contracts; here the Pope Force Force of the Law ceases, and its Obligations as to that particular, is removed from us. Sometimes the Matter of the Law is changeable by the Will of the Persons concerned, and by none but themselves, and Those who have the fame Power over them which themfelves have; fuch as God, and the Civil Magistrate under whom they live. Now in order to apply this to the Question about the Pope's Power of dispensing; I consider, that to establish this Power upon any words in Scripture, would be to pretend, that his Power of dispensing is an Act of Jurisdiction, and direct Authority; that is, he is allowed to dispense either with, or without Reason, only because he will. And he who can do fo, can perhaps do more than God For God never dispenses in a Law of Nature, till he has made fuch a Change in the Matter of it, as will justify the Difpensation. But if this Power of Dispensing be pretended to be such only, as arises from a Change of the Matter already made; that is, if there be a reasonable Cause for the Dispensation, but not sufficiently reasonable to him who is concerned, till it be competently declared: Then all the Dispute will be this, whether or no the Pope be the most probable Doctor. For to explain, when a natural Obligation ceases, is rather an Act of Wisdom, than of Power: But whether the Pope

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Pope be the wifest Man, is no where determined in Scripture. And further than This; if, in Things which are not prime Instances of natural Law, or of perpetual Obligation; but in humane Contracts, Promifes, Laws, and Vows, which arise from the Will or Pleafure of Men, and are only corroborated by the Law of Nature, he assumes to himself a Power of dispensing as he pleases; the Effect of fuch a Power must be this: That he is Master of the Actions and Fortunes, the Wills and Contracts of Men. But neither can this be countenanced by any Words of Scripture. 6. The Civil Law can add to the Law of Nature: Not only by giving it the new Sanction of Civil-Penalties, but by requiring new Circumstances to strengthen and confummate an Action. Not that any Civil Laws can annul any thing which a natural Law hath confirmed; but only, that they can hinder it from receiving the publick Approbation or Allowance. Thus they may, as feverely as they pleafe, discountenance clandestine Marriages, but they cannot dissolve them. For the Persons contracted are under stronger Obligations to obey a Natural, than a Civil Law.

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That the Obligation to a natural Law does cease in any Particular, is not to be presumed by every one, but is to be declared by the publick Voice.

This is plain from what has been faid before. For the feveral Dispensations in the Law of Nature, are to be made only by the change of their subject Matter. But then, fince the feveral Matters of Laws can be altered by feveral Powers respectively; that Authority which changes the Matter, and fo dispenses with the Law, must, by some Evidence or other, declare the Alteration. If God, by his Authority, changes the Cafe, and dispenses in the Law; he must not only declare it, but give express leave to perform those Actions, which we imagine fuch a Change would infer. He hath bound us to the Laws of Nature; and leaves us fo bound, till he tells us we are free. The Case is just the fame, in Laws where the Matter of them is changed by Man. For, being obliged by the Law of Nature, to submit to Laws, and perform Contracts; we must remain under this Obligation, till the Power which restrained us, tells us we are free.

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The Exactness of natural Laws is capable of Interpretation, and may be allayed by Equity, and Piety, and Necessity.

Whatfoever can be dispensed withal, is either difpensed with by an absolute Jurisdiction, or for some Reason in the Nature of the Thing. And if the Laws of Nature can cease to oblige, without Reason, only by the Will of God; much more may the same Will make it cease, to oblige when there is Reason for it. And if, in some Particulars, there be Reason to remove the Obligation of them wholly; we may suppose there may be better Reasons for taking off a little from their Rigour and Exactness. A Man is naturally obliged to restore his Neighbour's Goods, when they are demanded; but if a Man requires his Sword of me to kill another immediately; the Charity and Equity of refuling it him, till his Fury is over, will fave me from the Breach of a natural Law. To pay Debts is a Law of Nature; but if a wealthy Man calls for a Sum of Money, which is due to him, and I, by paying it him to Day, shall be undone, but he, by staying for it till next Week, shall receive no Damage: I do not transgress the Law of Nature, tho'

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### CHAP. II.

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Of the Law of Nature, or of all Mankind, as it is commanded, digested, and perfected by our supreme Lawgiver Jesus Christ.

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Of the Christian Law, the great Rule vamors of Conscience. believed Realess for taking off a little from

## RULE L. HONORON

When the Law of Jesus Christ was established, the Old Testament, or the Law of Moses, did no longer oblige the Confcience. number to kind the Porvelland

OD being the fupreme Lawgiver, hath Power over his own Laws, as, in the Capacity of a Creator, he has Power of the whole Creation. He who bestowed Being, has it in his Power to take it away; and and God may change his own Laws, tho' himself be immutable. His Attributes indeed

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deed are unchangeable, but not his Works. He commanded all Men not to do Murther; and yet, expressly ordered Abraham to kill his Son. So that, tho' he at first established the Law of Moses; yet it was still in his Power, without the Imputation of Mutability or Inconstancy, to give the World a new, and better Law. Our bleffed Lord therefore was indued with Power from on high, to give a new Law. He was a great Prophet, performed many Miracles, promoted the spiritual Worship of the only true God, and brought Mankind over, from a mean and childish, to a natural, spiritual, and manly way of worshipping Him. And indeed, considering that the Rites in the Law of Moses, were burthensome, impersect, expenfive, and inlignificant, utterly unable to put away Sins, or to perfect the Minds of Men; that they had nothing substantial in themselves, but were only a shadow of good Things to come; in a word, that they feemed chiefly calculated for the Weaknels of an imperfect People: I fay upon confidering this, we cannot but see the Expediency of a Change in Them.

As to the Imperfection of the Mosaic Law; we may shew from the Mouth of God himfelf, that it was imperfect, when, tho' he permitted Divorces, he says, by the Mouth of his Prophet, I hate putting away. The Q 2 Promises

Promises of the Mosaic Laws, upon Obedience to those Laws, were wholly temporal, and related to this Life only. And very many of the Laws themselves which they were obliged inviolably to observe, not being formed upon the Laws of Nature and Reason, ought not to be supposed to be perpetually obliging, or unlike-

ly to admit of a change.

For these Reasons there will be the less difficulty in removing the Pretence of the Jews, for the Eternity of the Mosaic Dispensation. They commonly urge, that God himself called it an everlasting Covenant: But then, they well know, that the word everlasting, does not, even in their own Books, always signify an Infinity of Time. God, in relation to the Land of Canaan, promised to give them an everlasting Inheritance; and yet their Possession of this Land, and their Covenant, which were both promised to be everlasting, expired together.

The Reflections hitherto made relate to the Jews, and are defigned to shew them, the Possibility of the Abrogation of Moses's Law. But to prove to Christians the actual Abrogation of it, I shall produce some of the words of the New Testament, so far as the Thing it self relates to Conscience. Nor will this be altogether unnecessary, since very many both of the ancient and modern

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Christians, have, in their Doctrines, their Reasonings, and their Actions, paid so great a Deserence to it.

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And in order to this, I alledge the Apostolic Decree at Jerusalem, upon the Point of Circumcifion; the Abrogation of which difannuls the whole Law: For I Paul fay unto you, if ye be circumcised, ye are Debtors to keep the whole Law: And consequently, if Circumcifion, that great Sacrament and Sanction of the Law, be annulled, we are then no longer Debtors to keep the Law. It is faid likewise, in the New Testament, the Law and the Prophets, were until John; since that time, the Kingdom of God is preached: Where the different Terms of the Law and the Gospel, are expressly mentioned. So that from John the Baptist's time, we are no longer under the Law, but under Grace. We are dead to the Law: And Christ, our High Priest, is after the Order of Melchisedec, not after the Order of Aaron: So that, the Priesthood being changed, there is made, of necessity, a change also of the Law. Nor was the Law given any longer, than till Christ the promised Seed should come. And ever fince he came, he was made our Lawgiver, and we became his Subjects till the last Day, in which he shall give up the Kingdom to his Fathere or indominal od you vam it sugarant

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### Of the Christian Law, or

But the main difficulty is still behind. For fince part of the Law of Moses is enjoined by Christ; and some of it is of natural and perpetual Obligation: The next Enquiry therefore will be, what part of Moses's Law is abrogated by Jesus Christ? To this I shall endeavour to give a distinct Answer.

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The Ceremonial Law of Moses is wholly void.

For this is that Hand-writing of Ordinances, which Christ nailed to his Cross; and of which there is this Command recorded by the Apostles, Let no Man judge you in Meat, or in Drink, or in respect of an Holy Day, or of the new Moon, or of the Sabbath Days. So that to us the Case is plain; and those Arguments which have been urged hitherto, relate chiefly to the Ceremonial part of the Mosaic Law, which being made up of Types, Figures, and imperfect Services, were not naturally obliging, nor sufficient to cleanse the Conscience, nor to take away Sins.

There is, indeed, one Difficulty in the Point before us, which may occur to more tender and scrupulous Minds, and which therefore it may not be improper to endea-

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your to remove. Some imagine that the Obligation to abstain from Blood and Things Acts xv. strangled, remains in full Force; and in Defence of this scruple, urge the Canon of the Apostles at Jerusalem, who reckon the abstaining from These, among the Things necessary. It is certain that the Church did, for several Ages, religiously abstain from Blood; and it was the great Argument by which the Primitive Christians refuted the Calumnies of the Pagans, who charged them with drinking humane Blood, that They could not be supposed to drink humane Blood, who fo religiously abstained from the Blood of Beafts.

But to the Difficulty, I answer: 1. That to abstain from Blood, is not a Law of Nature, appears from its not being at all impoled upon the old World; but only, for a special Reason, given to the Posterity of Noah, to guard against any Inclinations to Cruelty and Inhumanity. And the Prohibition it self against the eating of Blood, implies no more than This, that they were not to eat the Flesh of Beasts that were alive; that they were not to eat the Flesh with Gen. ix.4. the Life thereof, that is, with the Blood. So run the words of the Prohibition; and accordingly the Doctors of the Jews explained it by the not tearing or rending the Members of any Beast whilst it was alive. 2. But

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2. But the Point is cleared up by God himfelf, in the Place where he made the Law. The original Design of the Prohibition, was to introduce Mercy into the World, by obliging us to be merciful even to Beafts, and to deter Men from the Guilt of Homicide. And accordingly, Irenaus, Tertultian, St. Cyprian, and St. Ambrofe, take the Defign of the Command to be only a Prohibition of Homicide. This Precept could not be founded upon a Law of Nature, because it is not mentioned by Christ in all his Law: Only that Sense of it which I have just given, arifes from a natural Law, and is consequentially enjoined by Christ, under the Precepts of Mercy and Charity. 3. We may distinguish between Blood as it is a Substance, from Blood as it is alive. We are to ab-Stain from Blood that flows whilst the Beast is dying, that is, we are not to indulge the Inclinations of Cruelty or Inhumanity even towards them. But Blood confidered as fuch after the Beast is dead, may be safely eaten as other Things. For that Blood should be forbidden confidered as Meat, is directly a-Matt. vv. gainst the Analogy of the Gospel. Christ faith, that nothing that entereth into the Mouth, defileth a Man. And St. Paul obferves, that Meat commendeth us not to God; for neither if we eat, are we the better; neither if we eat not, are we the worfe; non

nor doth the Kingdom of God confist in Meat and Drink, but in Righteousness and Peace, and Joy in the Holy Ghost. It follows therefore, that Blood, considered as Meat, cannot be supposed to be prohibited here, as naturally unlawful, or essentially evil. If therefore the Apostles had forbidden the eating Blood as Meat; it must be supposed to have been a temporary Prohibition only, which was to expire, when the particular Reasons, for which it was made, should cease.

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The judicial Law of Moses is annulled or abrogated, and retains no obliging Power, in whole or in part, over any Christian Prince, Commonwealth, or Person.

The judicial Law was either wholly Civil, or it was part of the Religion. If it was wholly Civil; it expired with the Commonwealth, to whom it was given: If it was part of the Religion; it then expired with the Temple, the Priesthood, with the Covenant of Works, and at the coming and Reign of the Messias. Indeed the Instances of this Law, as coming from the wifest Lawgiver, are good Guides to Princes, when the same Reasons, and Circumstances of Things occur; but lay no manner of Obligation upon Them,

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Them. In the judicial Law, Theft was not punished with Death: The Thief was only to restore four fold: And unless the Necesfities of a State highly require it, it were very agreeable to the Design of Christianity, to Compassion, to the Worth and Interest of Souls, that a Life should not answer for the Theft of a Trifle.

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But the Abrogation of the judicial Law, in general, is confessed; why therefore it should be thought obliging, in any Particulars, I do not well understand. For there are no Exceptions of any particular Instances, made in the new Law, or the Law of Jesus Christ. But there are some Difficulties arising from this Article, in Relation to two great Instances; which are, I. The Approach of a Man to his Wife, during the usual Term of her Separation. And, 2. The Degrees of Kindred in which Marriage is prohibited. Both which Points, being expressly settled in the Judicial Law, but not fo much as mentioned in the Law of Christ, are yet suppofed to oblige Christians as much now, as they did the Jews of old. But in order to remove the Uncertainty and Inquietude which often arises in the Minds of Men in their Enquiries into these Points; I shall here confider them distinctly, and enquire whether they are still obligatory. care but, lay no mander of Obligation open

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We are, first, to examine whether the judicial Law of mutual Abstinence, in the Days of Womens separation, obliges Christian Pairs? Of It gray of the viel on rebnu ton

The judicial Law declared an Approach, during those Times, to be twice Penal. Once, it only derived upon the Offenders, a legal Uncleanness for seven Days, Levit. xv. 24. But, Levit. xx. 18. it is made Capital to them both; they shall be both cut off from the People. From hence, Aquinas and others of the Schoolmen, affirm it to be a mortal Sin, for an Husband then to approach his Wife. I offe any bottomions son

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They who suppose such an Approach to be unlawful, contend that the Law made against it, is Ceremonial, Judicial, and Moral. It is Ceremonial, fay they, as it inferred a legal Impurity, or separation for seven Days; it is Judicial, as it decreed upon the Offenders a capital Punishment; and it is Moral, in that it was charitably defigned against the Injuries which might happen to a Child begot in fuch Approaches. So that the whole stress of the Affair depends upon This; that That which was, by the divine Law, to be punished with Death, was something more than a mere breach of Ceremony, fomething that has in it a natural Turpitude and Obliquity. And besides, this being ennumerated among the Things which were committed

Lev. xx. committed by the Nations, and for which God abborred them; it follows, that fince it was thought a Crime in Those who were not under the Law of Moses, it could be a Crime only because it was a violation of the Law of Nature.

> To these Reasons, I answer; I. That tho' all fuch Approaches were, under the Law of Mofes, to be punished with Death; yet this would be no certain Argument, that there was a natural Obliquity in the Approach. For then, Circumcifion would be necessary by a natural Law; for every Soul that was not circumcifed, was also to be cut off from bis People. 2. But neither was it just thus in the Mosaic Law. For by that Law, it only became a legal Impurity, a Separation from the Temple, from the publick Sacrifices, and fome kinds of Commerce for feven Days: And thus much was laid upon the Woman, only in Consequence of the Circumstances she was then in; and tho' she had not converfed with any Man. If therefore, we may judge of the greatness of a Sin, by the greatness, or favourableness of the Punishment; it will follow, that every fuch Approach, was nothing but a breach of a legal Rite or Ceremony, fince it was punished with a legal Separation, and which was likewise inflicted upon every innocent Woman during a certain Period. But it was observed, committee

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observed, that by the judicial Law, such Approaches were likewise made Capital. But, I think, that could not be, if the Cafe were the fame. For Laws do not, directly and primarily, appoint two Punishments for the fame Offence. Some therefore having obferved, that there feems to be a direct Contradiction in the Letter of these two Laws, contend, that they ought to be reconciled in a spiritual Sense, but which they cannot make intelligible either to themselves or others. Others have thought, that the first Punishment was to be inflicted only upon those who sinned ignorantly; but that the Punishment was Capital, to those, who vo-luntarily and knowingly offended. But neither is This Account probable: For then it might happen, that the Man should only contract a legal Impurity; but the Woman, because she could not be ignorant, should be fure to die for it. Theirs therefore is the most likely Opinion, who fay, that the legal Impurity was the Punishment, only when the Fact was private; but that the Crime, when it was brought before the Judge, became Capital; and not altogether without Reason. For fince the Woman also was to die, we cannot imagine she would accuse her Husband, and condemn her felf; and fuch things are not wont to be done publickly. It may therefore be prefumed, that whofoever

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ever should be guilty in such a manner, as to put it in the Power of another to accuse and convict him of this Crime, must have done it in Contempt of Moses's Law; for which, says St. Paul, a Man was to die without Mercy. And hence it is plain, that the Capital Punishment was inflicted, not for any natural Turpitude of the Action, but for

the open Contempt of the Law.

As to the Argument, which is drawn from the Injury which the Child begotten at fuch a time, may receive; tho' it were certain and conclusive, yet it does not prove the Unlawfulness of fuch an Approach For if the Man and Wife have a mutual Right to each other, there is no Injury done in using their own Right. Indeed, if either of them, intended Hurt to the Child in fuch Approaches, as hoping the Child might not live; or if it was the Design of either of them, that by fuch means, the Child should be rendered less perfect; the Approach then, would be impious and detestable. Besides, if this Argument proves any Thing, it proves too much For it as strongly concludes against those, who, labouring under any chronical, or hereditary Distempers, should endeavour to get Children, or use the Remedy God hath given them against Uncleanness. because are not sweet to be done and

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If it be pretended, that the Cases are different; fince in one Case, the married Perfons may wait Nature's leifure, who will in few Days restore them to their usual Liberties; whereas if they have the Leprofy, that will stay upon them; and yet, since either a Child must be gotten by leprous Persons with that Danger, or not at all; and fince it is better a Child should be born Leprous. than not be at all: In this Case there is indeed Charity in some sense, but no Cruelty in any, to the Child. And there may be likewise a Necessity on the Part of the Parents. To this I reply; that the difference of Cafe here urged, is not sufficient; because the Leprofy may not be fo remediless a Difcase, but that, for the preventing of Cruelty, or any difmal Effects upon the Child, they may wait nature's time. But if it should be faid, that there may be Danger of Fornication in abstaining so long; I reply, so there may be, and actually is, to some Persons who fhould abstain no longer, than the Law, here under confideration, enjoins. The Jews found less difficulty in obeying this Injunction, by the Relief they might find in Divorces, Polygamy, and Concubinage: But Christians, who are to confine themselves to a fingleBed, if they were obliged to observe this Law, might possibly find themselves under such a Necessity, which, were it not provided vided for by a natural Permission, would forcibly, and almost irresistibly, hurry them into Sin. If therefore, accidentally, and under those Circumstances, it may be lawful and necessary to approach a Wise, it cannot

be actually and effentially Evilor

To the last Objection, that this Approach is reckoned among all those Things for which God abborred the Nations, and therefore must have in it some natural Impurity, fince God would never punish them for not obeying the Law of Moses, which they had never heard of, but only for the Transgression of a natural Law; I answer: That we are not to lay too great a stress upon this Argument, because, in some Instances, the Servants of God have even infringed the Law of Moses, and yet God delighted in them. Thus, in Relation to Marriages in certain Degrees, Abraham married his Father's Daughter; and yet this is not reckoned in the Catalogue of their Crimes.

From what has been said, therefore, we may conclude, 1. That this Abstinence was a Mosaic Law, partly Ceremonial, partly Judicial, but in no Sense Moral. 2. That the Abrogation of the Mosaic Law, doth effectually annul This. 3. That the Sanction of this Law to the Jews, was the Fear of Death, or of a legal Impurity: Which Fears being now removed, and no new ones introduced

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figi hig by Christ our Lawgiver, we are not now under that Restraint.

We proceed now to confider another Instance in the judicial Law, of much greater moment, concerning the Probibition of Marriages in certain Degrees. For all those Degrees, in which Moses hath prohibited Marriages, are still supposed, by very many, to retain their former Obligation; imagining, that because God once annexed to this Law very severe Sanctions, it therefore continues its Force upon us who are Christians. I shall examine this Point as distinctly as I can, because the Questions arifing from it, have not been fo fully and clearly stated, as the Importance of the Matter, and the Necessities of the World require. For it is, at this Day, a Point mightily canvassed among Men, whether Brothers and Sisters Children, or Cousin Germans, may lawfully marry? Which Question implies, that not only the Levitical Degrees are still thought obliging, but even all other Degrees, which, by a Parity of Reason, may be reduced to their Measures.

### Of Parents and Children.

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There may several natural Reasons be affigned, why Parents and Children, or the higher and lower in the direct Line, should not be permitted to marry. It would invert the

the Order and Course of Nature. If a Son marry his Mother, she who is greater in right Geniture, becomes less, upon the same material Account upon which she became greater; she cannot receive the Duty and Reverence due to a Mother, from him who is her Husband. The Case is much the same between a Father and a Daughter; it being very indecent, that she should claim from him the Rights of a Wife, to whom the owes the Awe and Veneration due to a Father. These however, and the like Reasons, as the general Detestation of such Mixtures, and the shock it gives our natural Modesty, are not fufficient to make it become a natural Law, but by the Assistance of God's Authority. These Reasons, indeed, made it highly expedient to be established into a Law; God therefore did establish it, and would not trust the mere Reason of Men with the Conduct of it. It became therefore an eternal Law, when God made it fo; and that was, when be gave a Wife to Adam. Moses informs us, Gen.ii.24. What God then made to be a Law: For this Cause shall a Man leave his Father and his Mother, and shall cleave unto his Wife, and they shall be one Flesh. This Law indeed, could not concern Adam on both fides, who had no Father nor Mother; and therefore must be intended for those who should ipring from him. When they should take a

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Wife of Husband respectively, they must forfake Father and Mother; for between them and their Children a Conjunction must not be allowed. This is the way in which the Jews understood that Law; and thus they commonly reconcile the feeming difference between this Law, and the fifth Commandment; a Man shall leave his Father and Mother; and yet he is obliged to Honour his Father and his Mother. He must never leave to Honour them; but when he thinks of marrying, he must throw up all Thoughts of contracting with either of Them. For Mother and Wife here, being opposite Terms; and it not being allowable ever to leave honouring the Mother; it feems highly probable, that to leave or for sake in this place, which we are commanded to do, only fignifies, that we are to leave or forfake any Deligns of making a Mother a Wife.

A Mother is not less to be loved, or less to be reverenced, after Marriage than before; if therefore a Man be never permitted to leave loving his Mother, the Precept seems principally to intend, that he is to leave all

Thoughts of marrying her.

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This therefore being made a Law of Nature, in that way only which is certain and incontestable; the different Sentiments of some Men, or the Practice of whole Nations, are not Arguments against it. For, as R 2

I observed in the first Chapter, the Consent of Nations is not all that is necessary to establish a natural Law: For God only appoints the Sanction; and when he hath declared it, tho' all Mankind should act in opposition to it, yet they would not annul it.

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But the Nature forbids the Conjunction of Parents and Children; yet the other Relations are prohibited upon other Reasons. No Conjunction is against the prime Laws of Nature, but That which is made in the right ascending and descending Line. The Marriage of Brothers and Sisters was, at first, absolutely necessary, that the World might be peopled; and all Mankind are Sons and Daughters, proceeding from the first Mar-

riages of Brothers and Sifters.

But that we may consider this Point more distinctly, let it be observed, that tho' the World does generally condemn all such Marriages, as incestuous; yet Incest is not a Scripture Word, but wholly Heathen; and among the Pagans, signified all unchast, forbidden Marriages, such as were not allowed by Law and Honour, but inauspiciously made sine Cesto Veneris. This word being taken into the Civil Law, had a determinate meaning appropriated to it; for there were three kinds of unlawful Marriages, damnate, incesta,

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cesta, and nefaria. The damnata Nuptia, are those which the Law, for political Realons, has forbidden: As the Conjunction between Guardian and Orphan; and in the Law of Moses, between the High Priest and a Widow; and in Christianity, between a Priest and an Harlot. Incesta Nuptia, the Law defines to be Coitio Consanguineorum vel Affinium, the Conjunction of Kindred; meaning, in those Instances which are prohibited by the Law. Now these are forbidden for Reasons different from the former; for their nearness of Blood, which the Law would have more diffeminated, for their Approach to Marriages plainly unnatural, for publick Honesty, or the like. But because fome Persons have injudiciously called unnatural Mixtures, by the Name of incestuous, as incestuous Lot, and the incestuous Corinthian; therefore Men think they may equally condemn what the Law calls Incest, with those unnatural and abominable Con-And in Fact, these are not so junctions. properly incesta Nuptia, incestuous, as nefariæ, impious and unnatural Marriages. For nefariæ Nuptiæ are, in a proper Sense, only those Marriages which are made in the right alcending or descending Line. The Marriages of Brothers is indeed, in the highest Degree, incestuous, and as such, prohibited by all Civil Nations: But they are unlawful for no other R 3

by positive Laws. But because this Prohibition is not expressed in the Laws of Christ; therefore such Conjunctions cannot be against the prime Law of Nature, of which Christ's

Laws are a perfect System.

But this is not intended fo much as to infinuate, that fuch Marriages can now be made lawful, or are, for any Reasons, to be tolerated. The Prohibition of them indeed could not be founded upon a prime Law of Nature, because the Constitution of the World made it unavoidably necessary to be broken: But because God afterwards passed it into a Law; and it is now highly reasonable it should be a Law; and because the Reason of it is natural, and will be perpetual, and all Christian Nations have agreed to prohibit fuch Mixtures; he who shall now recommend them as wife and reasonable, cannot do it upon the Motives of Religion, Reason, or Modesty.

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Of Mothers in Law, and their Husbands Children.

That the Marriage of these is utterly unlawful, may be gathered from this Expression of St. Paul; it is a Fornication which is not so much as named among st the Gentiles, that one should have his Father's Wife. Now here we are to observe, that what

what St. Paul fo highly abominates here, is not the Adultery, but the Impiery of it; not fo much that it was committed with a Wife. as with his Father's Wife: And tho' confidered barely as Adultery, it were a very high Crime; yet the Unnaturalness and Scandal of it, is what St. Paul here condemns. And indeed the Thing it felf is fo shocking to the common Sense of Men, that to name it only, is enough to confute it. For that Woman who is one Flesh with my Father, should be as near to me as my Father, and that is as near to me as my own Mother; as near, I mean, in the Eye of the Law, tho' not in the account of Nature: And therefore, tho' there be a less Turpitude in the Crime, yet it is equally prohibited; and is against the Law of Nature, tho' not directly, yet by Interpretation.

#### Of Uncles and Nieces,

Now if the very nearest Relations in the collateral Line, were not forbidden to marry by the Law of Nature, much less are they so forbidden, who bear a more distant Relation to each other. The ascending and descending Line are forbidden to marry by God in the Law of Nature: So are Mothers-in-Law and their Husbands Children: And Brothers and Sisters, are reasonably forbidden such Mixtures by the Laws of all the World, R 4

tho' not by the Law of Nature. As for all the other Degrees of Kindred, it is only then unlawful for them interchangeably to marry, when they are forbidden by a politive Law. And therefore the Conjunctions of Uncles and Nieces, of Aunts and Nephews, become unlawful, as the Laws of Men have decreed them fo. But they were not originally unlawful, nor are they prohibited by any Law of Christ. And Josephus, upon very good Reasons, supposes, that when Abraham faid of Sarah, she is my Sister; he expressed himself in a way very common among the Tews, and only meant, that she was the Child of his Father descending by his Brother. But whether this were his meaning, or that she was really his half Sister; it is certain, that by the Levitical Law, a Conjunction with either was forbidden. And therefore it is plain, that the Unlawfulness proceeded from the Breach of a positive Law, and not from the transgressing any Law of Nature.

### Of the Marriage of Cousin Germans.

From what has been faid, it follows, that no Man ought to be affrighted at the Pretences of those mistaken Persons, who violently contend that the Marriage of Cousin Germans is against the Law of Nature. For the Law of Nature being imprinted in our Hearts.

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Hearts, explained by Christianity, and formed upon plain, prime, natural Reason; if a Man needs information as to the natural Lawfulness of such Marriages, when those Principles of the natural Law do not condemn them: He may as well want to be informed, when he does a thing against his own Will, as when he acts against his own Reason and against his own Nature, which, as was said, are the Principles of the natural Law.

But if it should be asked, what is the Sense of the judicial Law, in this Cafe, which is the main of our present Enquiry; I say, that supposing the judicial Law did still in any Instance oblige Christians, yet Cousin Germans would have the Liberty to marry. For I do not find that fuch Marriages are there forbidden. The Law it felf, upon which the contrary Opinion is founded, runs in these words, Levit. xviii. 6. None of you shall approach to any that is near akin to him, to uncover their Nakedness, I am the Lord. We shall see whether this Law relates to the Marriage of Cousin Germans, by considering the Import of the words, none of you, and near of kin to you.

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of you, extend universally to both Jews and Gentiles. It may indeed easily be granted, that, in a Sense, all Mankind were included,

as all who were born to Ifrael, and all the Gentile Profelytes to the Jewish Religion, were, as fuch, obliged to observe this Law: But to fay, that it included Those who converfed not with the Jews, and were utter Strangers to their Laws, is as abfurd as to fay, that the Parthians were to be judged by the Gallic Laws, or that the Persians were indispensably obliged to observe the Laws of the Greeks. The Defign of Those who would introduce this fense of the words, is, to intimate, that the Degrees here mentioned, are forbidden by the Law of Nature, and confequently, still obligatory to all Chriflians; but fince it appears from the Premisses, that this cannot be; I shall only obferve further, that no Nation of old did obferve all these Laws, and that there was never any fufficient Argument to inforce the Obligation of them upon us. So that we now stand in the same Relation to them, that the Jews did, before the delivery of the Law; and if they were not obliged then, neither are we now.

As to the meaning of the words, near of kin to you; it has been observed, that our English does not fully express the Sense of them. The Latin is somewhat nearer to the Hebrew, Vir Vir non accedet ad Propinquitatem Carnis sua, to the Nearness of of his Flesh, to her that is so near akin, that they

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they usually live together in the same House; that is, Parents and Children, Brothers and Sisters, or Parent's Brothers, and Sisters. And it is very observable, that there is a mighty difference between *Propingui* and *Cognati*: For God never forbad to marry our Kindred, but has forbad us to marry the Nearness of our Flesh. When we rightly understand this Expression, the Difficulties of the Question

will be eafily removed.

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For near of Kin, is an indefinite Expresfion, and may fignify as indeterminately, as Great and Little do. It may take in all Generations of Mankind, among whom any Records are preserved: As, among the Jews, they were from Judah to Joseph the Hufband of the bleffed Virgin. Thus likewife it commonly is among the Spaniards and the Welch, and in the greater and more noble Families in all Nations. But fince, upon fome occasions, the Prohibition of marrying with Kindred, hath reached farther than at other Times; it is highly proper, that the Lawgivers should explain the meaning of the indefinite Terms they use. Now Hemingius gives as probable an Explication of the Words before us, as can be taken from the Words themselves, or from the most evident defign of them. Propinquitas Carnis, fays he, que me fine Intervallo attingit. That is, she who is next to me, none intervening

vening between the Stock and me. The Propinquity, or Nearness of my Flesh above me, is my Mother; beneath me, is my Daughter; on the one side, is my Sister: This is all. To which may be added, that These are not to be uncovered, for thy own fake; they are thy own, immediate Relations. And if any others are prohibited, they are forbidden for the fake of Thefe, for the fake of thy Father or Mother, thy Son or Daughter, thy Brother or Sister. For Thou must not uncover that Nakedness which is Thine own, in another Person who bears fuch a Relation to Thee in Blood, or Affinity. This I take to be all, that can possibly be faid to be forbidden by the Expression of near of Kin, or the nearness of thy Flesh.

And this we find expressed in the Case of Levit.xxi. the High Priests Mourning: The High Priest might not be defiled for the Dead among his People; but for his kin, that is near unto bim, be may: That is, for his Father, or his Mother; for his Son, or for his Daughter; for his Brother, and for his Virgin Sifter. This is therefore the Propinquitas Carnis; she, who is born immediately of the same Flesh of which I am born; or she, from whose Flesh I am born; or she, who is born from my Flesh, is the near of Kin here meant. But when a Bar doth intervene, all the others may be accounted Kindred, but not near a Kin, MICHON

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Kin, or nearness of my Flesh, which is here forbidden.

But That which ought to put it past all Doubt, the Conjunction of Coufin Germans was not forbidden by the Levitical Law, either expressly, or by Consequence from any other Prohibitions; is this: That it was practifed by Holy Men, both before and after the Law, at the Command or Direction of God himfelf. Thus Jacob married Rachel his Cousin German, the Daughter of his Uncle Laban. And there was fomething very remarkable in the Case of Zelophehad's Numb. Daughters; who, because they were Heiresfes, were commanded to marry their Kindred; and accordingly they married their Father's Brother's Sons. I prefume to offer one Proof more, as the last and greatest Example, of the Lawfulness and Sanctity of such Marriages under the Law of Moses. The blessed Virgin the Mother of the holy Jesus, was married to her Coufin German, as was fupposed, for this Reason: Her Husband Joseph was (faith St. Luke) the Son of Heli; that is, the legal Son of Heli: For according to St. Matthew, Jacob begot him. Now Heli and Facob were Brethren the Sons of Matthan, who was Grandfather to Joseph and Mary: For unless by the Kindred of Joseph and Mary, the same Genealogy took them both in; the Account of the Genealogy of Foseph

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Toleph, could not have proved that Christ descended from the Seed of David. But if this Instance should not hold, and they were more distantly related, (for they certainly were Coulins) yet the Examples already given are enough to fatisfy us in the En-

We now come to the Christian Law, and shall enquire whether our great Master and Lawgiver Jesus Christ hath prohibited the Marriage of Coulin Germans? But it cannot be very difficult to determine upon this Question: For the Sum of all that Christ hath faid relating to Marriage, is this; for this Cause, Shall a Man leave his Father and Mother, and shall cleave unto his Wife, and they two shall be one Flesh. So that he only here obliges us not to act against that primitive Law of Nature, in marrying in the right ascending and descending Line.

There are indeed some general Precepts in the New Testament, which may feem to relate to the Question of Marriages; as, provide Things honest in the sight of all Men, and follow after Things which are of good Report. The meaning is, whatfoever is against publick Honesty, the Law of Nations, the common Sense of Mankind, is not to be done by Christians, tho' the Thing it self be not forbidden by the Laws of Christ. And it was well observed of Modestinus the Lawyer,

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in Nuptiis, non solum quod liceat, sed etiam quod honestum sit, semper est respiciendum. But to obviate the Inference which some might draw from hence, I offer this Caution; that we do not take up with false, or weak Opinions of publick Fame and Honesty. Nothing but the Laws of God or Men, or the general Opinion of that part of Mankind with whom we any way converse, is the Measure of publick Honesty. Thus for a Bishop to hunt in his Pontifical Habit, or a Priest to keep an Alehouse, is against publick Honesty. But when a Thing is questioned and disputed on both sides, by good and learned Men, to act either way, is not against publick Honesty.

The New Testament therefore, as to the Point before us, having only laid us under a general Obligation to conform to the Rules of publick Honesty; we are only to enquire, whether the Marriage of Cousin Germans be inconsistent with it, or whether it be condemned by the Law of Nations, or the general Opinions or Practices of wise Men.

And here, I observe, that Plutarch, speaking of the ancient Laws and Customs of the Romans in marrying their Relations, says, it was a Practice, before it was a Law; and because it happened, that a worthy Man found very considerable Advantage by marrying his Cousin German, the People passed it

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into a Law, that any other Man might do it. Now this was very ancient; and before this Law for fuch Marriages, I find no Law against them: And it is very certain, that the older the Times were, the greater was the Liberty of marrying their Relations. Thus much however is certain, that there was an early Law for it; but none, that I can find, against it. But in later Times, Augustus gave his Daughter Julia to Marcellus, Son of Octavia his Sifter. And the brave Brutus, a wonderful Example of Virtue and Morality, married Porcia, the Daughter of his wife Uncle Cato. And that incomparable Man Marcus Antoninus, the Philosopher and Emperor, married his Coufin German, Annia Faustina.

Such Instances as these are sufficient to make one question the common Pretence, that the Marriage of Cousin Germans is against publick Honesty: But if we consider further, that God never forbad it; that he hath sometimes actually commanded it; that the Patriarchs practised it; that the Jewish Church never scrupled it; that it hath been admitted by the Law of Nations; and is no where prohibited in Scripture: We may, from these Considerations, venture to say, it ought

to be of good Report.

But if we enquire farther, how these Marriages were considered in the Civil Law of the the for ther Law wor in the allo the por the is i fatis

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the Romans, we shall still find a new Reason for lessening or removing our Scruples about them. For if the Law of the Romans, a Law composed by so many great; wise, and worthy Men, and which hath all along been in the highest Use and Veneration among the most considerable Nations; if, I say, they were allowed of by those Laws, we can have little Reason to think they can be of ill Report, or against publick Honesty. But that the Civil Law did permit such Marriages, it is in the Power of any Man abundantly to satisfy himself.

The Canon Law indeed, which is next to be inquired into, does forbid the Marriage of Cousin Germans; but it no where pretends, that the Marriage of Cousin Germans is against the divine Law. As is plain from the Epistle of Rabanus to Cardinal Humbert. Quod Pontifices, usque ad sextum vel septimum Gradum, Conjugium prohibent, magis ex Consuetudine humana, quam ex Lege divina Eos pracepisse credendum. The Canons did not intend to signify it to be against the divine Law, for Cousins to marry within the Degrees forbidden by the Canon Law.

But in England, these Laws are not now allowed, either by our Civil or Ecclesiastical Governours. They were laid aside, as burthensome and tiseless. They seemed to be chiefly Drains for Money, and Levies for Rents.

Rents. And even at this Time, a Dispensation may be had from the Pope himself, for Cousin Germans to marry, if they can but

come up to his Price.

Notwithstanding the Reslections hitherto made upon the Force of those Laws, which are commonly thought to oblige us; yet because the present Enquiry relates chiefly to the Obligations of the natural Law, from which, some suppose, there is a Prohibition derived against the Marriage of Cousin Germans: Let us farther, in sew words, examine whether the Thing be in it self imprudent or unreasonable.

And here we may venture to affirm, that whoever shall go about to assign the true and proper Reasons, why, by the Law of God, Marriage is forbidden within certain Degrees; will experimentally find, that he is engaged in a Difficulty which he will never be able to furmount. And yet Men have ventured to give fuch Reasons as they could; but whether they are conclusive, will, in some fort, appear from the Examination of those which are the more specious. St. Austin's fcruple is This: Ineft nescio quomodo bumanæ verecundiæ Quiddam naturale ac laudabile, ut cui debet, Causa Propinquitatis, verecundum Honorem, ab Ea contineat, &c. There is in the Modesty of Mankind something natural and Praise-worthy; which restrains

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restrains them from mixing with those, to whom they owe Honour and Reverence. This indeed is a good Reason, where this natural modesty does really lay Restraints, and takes its Rife from a true Sense of Duty and Reverence; and is, consequently, one of the most proper and natural Reasons against the Conjunction of Parents and Children; and may, in some certain Circumstances, extend to the Case of Brother and Sifter: But if you indulge it one step further, you may e'en let it run as far as you please; for you can never certainly know, where it ought to stop. It should therefore be restrained to the Bounds which God hath fixed; and the pretence of a natural Reason or Instinct, should not carry us further, than Nature ever intended. The Permissions of Nature, are certainly larger, than the Fears, the Scruples, the Interest of some Men, will let them avow. And the Cicero fometimes speaks against the Marriage of Cousins; we may reasonably suppose, he did it to remove a suspicion, that himself was too fond of a very near Relation of his own For 2 Fufins Calenus had very feverely upbraided him, Dio. Lis. Filia Matris Pellex tibi jucundior, atque 16.

But the best Reason against the Conveniency of those Marriages, is, that it were better that Cousin Germans should not marry,

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St. Austin expresses himself, that they might

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multiply Relations and Friendships in more Families, and be an occasion of a more diffufive Charity and Benevolence. But to this I observe, that the' this Objection were never fo well founded, yet it does by no means prove such Marriages unlawful; nor did Philo and Plutarch, from whom St. Chryfostom and St. Austin borrowed it, design it should. And the' there should be that one inconvenience in it, which the Objection mentions; yet there may possibly be other Conveniences in it which may render that one Inconvenience less forcible. St. Austin's Observation, in another place, appears to me ve-Lib. 15. ty considerable to this purpose. Fuit anti-Cap. 16. quis Patribus religiosa Cura, ne ipsa Prode civit. pinquitas, &c. The Dearness of Kindred will quickly wear out, and Cousins will too foon grow Strangers to each other: Therefore the Patriarchs were religiously careful to recall the Propinquity which was dividing and separating too fast; and as it were to fasten it by the Ties of Marriage, and recall it when it was flying away. And perhaps nothing was a firmer support to a Family, or a greater Band to conjugal Affection, than the Marriage of Coulins.

There is one trifling Pretence more against the Marriage of Coulin Germans, which I shall TI C

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ch I Shall second Cousins, say some, are expressly forbidden to marry; therefore, much rather, must first Cousins be forbidden likewise; tho' they are not mentioned. To this I shall only say, that neither does the Law of God forbid either of them, nor the Laws of our Church or State, nor the Laws of Nature or Nations, nor right Reason. On the contrary, they all justify such Marriages.

## RULE IV.

The Ten Commandments of Moses, commonly called the Moral Law, is not a perfect Digest of the Law of Nature.

In the School of Moses, Men practifed the first Rudiments of Perfection; but Christ was the last, and therefore the most perfect Legislator. They who began under Moses the Servant of God, were to advance under Jesus the Son of God. And therefore Christ is called ting to be our Lawgiver, and the Gospel to be his Law, called in the New Testament, the Law of Liberty, a Royal Law; we are to expect that our Duty shall reach further, than to a bare Conformity of our Actions to the Law of Moses.

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I will not here dispute whether Christ hath given us Laws, of which, neither before Moses, nor since, there are no Footsteps in the Old Testament; for I think there are none, which may not be said to have been some way taught and recommended before: But this I may venture to say, that some Perfections of Morality were, by Christ, superadded in the very Instances of the Decalogue. These also were bound upon us by severer Sanctions, are indeared to us by glorious Promises, and we, by the Assistance of God's

Grace, are enabled to perform them.

To give an Instance of this: The Christians were obliged to love their Brethren, and their Neighbours; and so were the Jews: But with this Difference. The Christians, were commanded to show their Love to all of the same Nature with themselves, to all in Calamity: They were to consider them as Neighbours, which the Jews did not think themselves obliged to do. For to the Question asked by the Pharisees, and who is our Neighbour? Christ answered, in the Parable of him who fell among Thieves; he who is in need, is our Neighbour. The Jews understood this to mean, only one of their own Nation or Religion. Those of a different Country or Religion, were an Abomination to them. Here then is plainly a new Duty, to which the Jews, in the same Latitude,

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for the Latitude, and the same Expressions, were not obliged by the Decalogue. This therefore imports as much as a new Commandment; for it is in Fact, new to me, if it imposes a new Duty. And that is made a Duty to us, which, to the Jews, was not a Duty; and we may perish for omitting That, to which they were not obliged so much as under the

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But not to mention the many Precepts laid upon us by Jesus Christ, which were never heard of in the Old Testament, and which therefore justly make him our Lawgiver; there may be many other Instances taken from the Nature of Things, to shew, the Imperfection of the Decalogue, confidered as a System of the Laws of Nature, For tho' the Decalogue forbids us to do Evil, it no where commands us to do Good. The Sons of Ifrael are bound to do Evil to no Man, but are not obliged to do Good to every Man: Nor did they ever understand that they were bound to give Alms by the fixth Commandment. Of the same Nature are Gratitude, readiness to help the Miserable, the keeping a Secret, or the performing Promiles; which are of greater moment to the Welfare of Men, than to be intrusted only to uncertain Inference or Analogy. And yet for Thele, there is no Provision made in the Ten Commandments.

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## Of the Christian Law, or

What we are to infer from these Remarks is, that when the Nature of Man was made, and in its Infancy, God drew from the eternal Fountain but a sew of those natural Laws; but still occasionally added more to them, as the World did need them; and at last, by his Son, who in his Incarnation hath adorned our Nature with a Robe of Glory, hath drawn out all those Laws, by which we are to converse with God and Man, in the best and greatest manner.

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All the Explications of the moral Law, which are found in the Prophets, and other holy Writers of the Old Testament, are to be accounted as Parts of the moral Law, and equally obliging the Conficence.

When God had faid, Thou shatt do no Murder; and Moses, in another Place, had added these words, Thou shatt not hate thy Brother in thy Heart, nor be mindful of any Injury; we are to suppose, that this Prohibition was intended by God in the Commandment, that it is a just Commentary upon the Text, and therefore a Part of the moral Law. Besides, by the sayings of the Prophets, they came to understand, what things

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things were permitted by Moses, which yet God did not love. For the' (as our Saviour afterward expressed it, Moses permitted Divorces for the bardness of their Hearts; yet, that from the beginning it was not so, they were sufficiently assured by the Gloss which God himself gave by the Prophet Hosea, when he said, I bate putting away.

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The Use of this Rule, as it relates to our Conscience, is to shew of what Use in our Religion, and of what Influence upon our Lives, are the Writings of the Old Teffament. All the moral Precepts of it arising from the Law of Nature, or universal Reafon, are either Explications of the Decalogue, or evangelical Precepts by which the old Prophets did prepare the Way of our Lord, and make his Paths strait. In this respect indeed, the Prophets are Preachers of Righteoufness; and we may refresh our Souls at those Rivulets springing from the Well of Life: But our chief Refreshment we are to take from our Redeemer, who hath anointed our Heads, prepared a Table for us, made our Cup to overflow, and of his Fullness we have all received.

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Every Thing in the Decalogue is not obligatory to Christians, is not a Portion of the moral, or natural Law.

It has been a Question very much debated among the Ancients and Moderns, Jews and Christians, how the Ten Commandments ought to be divided. Particularly, whether those which we commonly call the first and second, are really two distinct Laws; or whether That, which is usually called the fecond, is not rather an Explication of the other, and so only a part of it. They who contend, that That which is commonly called the fecond Commandment, is only an Explication, or part of the first, would infer, that they are thereby only forbidden to introduce the Worship of other Gods, Dii alieni; or that they are not to confider the Images as Gods; but only as the Representation of God; and that therefore, they are not forbidden to pay them fuch Worship as does not belong to the true God. But on the other hand, they who say that the fecond is a diffinct Commandment, are of Opinion, that it prohibits the making, or paying to Images any kind of Worship at all. These are the Consequences designed to be drawn

drawn from the different Division of the first Table; whether or no they justly follow from it, I shall not examine; but shall consider it, only as it relates to the Rule of Conscience.

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It may not be improper however, occasionally to observe, that the Church of Rome, and the Lutherans, generally confound thosetwo Commandments, yet for no other Reafons but fuch as are taken from their different Interests. For the Church of Rome is aware, that if the fecond be a diftinct Commandment from the first, it will follow, that the taking of Images into Religion, or the worshipping the true God by an Image, is as expressly forbidden, as the worshipping more than one God in the first Commandment. But if these two Commandments were only one, then they are of Opinion, that this Prohibition of Images, being only a Consequence of the other Prohibition of haying more Gods than one, is intended only to shew, that we are not to consider the Images as God; which the Church of Rome certainly does not.

The Interests indeed of the Lutheran Churches, which have engaged them in confounding those two Commandments, are less important, and therefore less excusable. They seem to confound them chiefly for this Reason, lest it should be unlawful to make, or

to possess Pictures or Images. They still retain them in their Churches; but are afraid of being charged with a Crime forbidden in the second Commandment: For they retain them only for the fake of Memory; but in no sense take them into their Worship or Religion. But herein they are rather afraid than hurt. For the' the fecond Commandment were distinct, and wholly forbad Images, and their Worship; yet every thing in the Commandment is not of a moral Nature, tho' the Commandment it felf be. For God was pleafed to appoint fuch convenient Instruments of a moral Duty, as were fitted to the Condition of that People; which, like the occasional Supporters of a Building, were placed there only till the building had fixed it felf, and could stand alone.

But whether the Clause about having or making Images, be referred to the first, or fecond Commandment, the Case is just the same. If it be referred to the first, it intends, that they were not to make Images, lest they should become the Objects of divine Worship: If to the second: Then they were not to be made, lest they should become Instruments of a false manner of divine Worship: But in both senses, the Prohibition is still but relative, as is plain from Levit. xxvi. 1. Te shall make ye no Idols, nor graven Image, neither rear ye up a standing

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Image, neither shall ye set up any Image of Stone in your Land (to bow down unto it) for I am the Lord your God. So that it is plain, that the Prohibition refers not to the Image absolutely, but only as the Worship of it might be made a part of their Religion. God himself gave orders for the making the brazen Serpent, and the Images, or Hieroglyphicks of Cherubims to be set over the Propitiatory, which he would not have done, had it been against his own eternal Law. He suffered them not to worship them, but only to make them; which shews, that to make them, was no breach of Morality, tho, to worship them, was.

This then may serve for one Instance of the Rule; that the having or making Images, tho' it be, by the second Commandment, forbidden to the Jews, yet it is not unlawful

to Christians.

Now as to the Religion of Images, I mean, the worshipping of God by them directly, or indirectly, whether That be lawful to Christians; tho' I have in some fort already shewn that it is not, when I observed, that the Lawfulness of it could not be inferred, but by confounding the first and second Commandment; or that tho' they were really one Commandment, yet it could not follow from thence, that the Worship of Images was lawful, or allowed of; yet it may not be altogether

together impertinent to determine this Case upon its proper Grounds, in these two Enquiries. 1. Whether it be lawful to make a Picture or Image of God? 2. Whether it be lawful to worship God by either of them?

As to the former, whether it be lawful to make a Picture or Image of God? I am of Opinion that it is not. And my Opinion is founded upon the plain Words of God in Deuteronomy, which in consequence of the fifth Rule, are to be considered as an Explication of the moral Law, and therefore obligatory to Christians; as relating to the Matter of the Commandment, giving a natural Reason for a natural Duty, and enforcing That by Argument, which was before supported only by Authority, and explaining upon the Tables of the Heart, that which he had before delivered to Moses in Tables of Stone. Take ye therefore good heed unto your selves, for we saw no manner of simi-

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of Stone. Take ye therefore good heed unto your selves, for ye saw no manner of similitude, in the Day when the Lord spake unto you in Mount Horeb, out of the midst of the Fire: lest ye corrupt your selves, and make ye a graven Image, the similitude of any Figure, &c. Now why should God so emphatically observe to them, that they saw no Image, but because he would not have them think of representing him by an Image? In other Places he discounter

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nances any fuch Attempts, in a manner, which shews it to be not only impious to do it in opposition to his Commands, but likewise, that it is abfurd, foolish, and, in the nature of Things, impossible. To whom will ye liken God? Or what Likeness will ye compare unto him? fays he, by his Prophet.

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But it is commonly faid, that the the Effence of God cannot be represented in Painting or Sculpture; yet fuch Reprefentations as, upon certain occasions, he hath been pleased to make of himself, may. And since God was pleased to appear to Daniel like the ancient of Days, the Holy Ghost, in the shape of a Dove, and Christ in the form of a Man; these Representations may be made in Picture or Imagery, without any Disparagement to the Divinity.

To this I reply; first, that we are not to Suppose that Daniel, in that Vision, really faw God, in the shape he there mentions. No Man bath seen God at any time. Daniel therefore did not fee God the Father, nor could he possibly see him. God would not be represented to him by any visible similitude; neither therefore have we any Authority fo to represent him by this Dream. It is not enough to fay, that the' Daniel did not see God's Essence, yet he saw a Representation of it; for he did not see any Representation of God; he did not see God by

by any Thing that expressed his Substance. The Vision might represent to him some auguft and glorious Figure; but that could not reprefent a Being who has no Figure. But if, because there is in Daniel, mention made of the Ancient of Days, it were lawful to picture God like an old Man; we might as rationally draw a Door, and fay, it reprefents Chrift, because he calls himself a Door; or a Thief, and fay, it is like the Day of Judgment, which is faid to come as a Thief in the Night. But this is only intended to point out the Weakness and Indecency of fuch Attempts; the unlawfulness of them, feems to arife from the express Command of God.

Our Saviour indeed, considered in his humane Capacity, was a Subject capable of being reprefented; and therefore, it cannot be either impious or abfurd, to posses, or make a Representation of Christ's Humanity, or, to speak more properly, his humane Body.

But there is a great and more plaufible Pretence for the common Image of the Holy Ghost in the form of a Dove; even the words of Scripture. For in this Instance, that Reafon is of no Force, for which God forbad the making an Image of himfelf. For here they did not only hear a Voice, but also they faw a Shape. For the Holy Ghost descended in the likeness of a Dove, or in a bodily Shape.

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So St. Luke expresses himself. To this I reply, that the Holy Ghost did not appear in the shape of a Dove at all; but the Dove mentioned in the account, fignifies only the manner of his descending and hovering over Christ. As is plain from the words of St. Matthew, he saw the Spirit of God defeending like a Dove; that is, as Doves use to descend, hovering over him. It cannot be denied indeed, that Men generally suppose, without having considered the Point, that the Holy Ghost did actually descend in the Shape of a Dove. Yet granting this to be true, it will amount only to thus much; that they beheld a Light, formed into fuch a shape; like a bright Cloud, which reprefents different Figures, according to the differing Imaginations of the Beholders: And if they faw nothing but a dazling light in fuch a Form; they cannot justify themselves in making That a real and proper Reprefentation of the Holy Ghost. Tertullian indeed, is of Opinion, that it was really and properly a Dove which descended. If it were io, the whole Business is at an end: For any Dove may be represented; but the holy Spirit is not to be represented by that Creature, which was only fent upon his Errand and Design. And this I take to be a full Solution to the Objection. If either of the Perions in the most holy Trinity were to appear in.

in a bodily Shape; I doubt not to fay, that Shape might be painted, or an Image of it made: But God having hitherto kept himfelf, with regard of his Substance, within the fecret Recesses of his Sanctuary, it is the greatest Absurdity to suppose, that the Godhead can be represented by This or That Form. If therefore a Dove be drawn, it must not be defigned to represent the Holy Ghost. For the it should be granted, that at the defcent of the Holy Ghost upon our Saviour, the shape of a Dove was really visible, yet that Form bore no manner of Relation to the Person of the Holy Ghost, but only to the Impression made upon the Person on whom the Form defcended.

Some will contend however, that it cannot be unlawful to represent in Picture those Ideas, which the words of Scripture had before conveyed to the Mind. And therefore since the words of the sacred Writers have ascribed to God a particular and distinct shape, it cannot be more impious to describe him in Picture. But let these Men represent God in Painting, as one awakened out of sleep, or as a Giant filled with Wine; and their saying, that This may be drawn, as well as written, will not save them from the Charge of unsufferable Impiety.

But the next Enquiry, whether it be lawful for Christians to worship God by an Image? fo w cl

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Image? Is of much greater Importance. This Question is best resolved by the Commandment: For it is certain that the fewish Church, in Obedience to That, thought it Idolatry to worship God in any Image whatfoever. Thus the Ifraelites were Idolaters when they made the golden Calf; and proclaimed, Thefe are thy Gods, O Ifrael, who brought thee out of the Land of Egypt; and to Morrow is a Solemnity to Jehovah, faid Aaron. The Calf they defigned for an Image of their God, and by it intended to worship him: For they changed their Glory into the similitude of a Calf that eateth Hay; that is, they represented their God, who was their Glory, by a golden Calf. In short, the Unlawfulness of worshipping God by an Image, was fo univerfally maintained by the Fathers, so condemned by the Doctrines and Practice of the Church, and the Opinions of the Jewish Doctors; that Vasquez, a great modern defender of Image Worship, is forced to confess that, at that time, when the Commandments were given; it was not lawful, to worship the true God by an Image.

But, say some, tho' it was not then lawful, it is lawful now: For the Prohibition was only temporary, as it was only calculated for restraining that strong inclination to Idolatry so visible in the Jews: And that

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therefore the Precept it felf was meerly of

a positive, and not a moral Nature.

In opposition to this, it may be observed, that Idolatry is a Sin against the Law of Nature; and that therefore whatever was Idolatrous in the Jews, is likewise Idolatry in Now that the worshipping God Christians. by an Image is Idolatry, or a Sin against natural Reason, may in some fort appear, from the Absurdity and Impossibility which was before observed, of representing God by an Image. Besides, to worship false Gods, or to pay divine Honour to an Image which is not God, is equally idolatrous. For in each Case, we make That to be our God, which

indeed is no God.

He who forms an Image of God, and worships it, pays it the very worship due to God whom it represents, or a worship of a different kind. If a different or less worship, he does not properly worship God in the Image: But his Adoration, such as it is, is terminated on the Representation. But if I would worship God by the Image; then in the Act of Adoration, I conjoin and confider them as one Object, and so pay to both the same Worship: And therefore, unless the two different Objects, the Exemplar, and the Representation, become really one, I cannot avoid paying divine Worship to that which is no God; which is direct Idolatry.

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The Council of Trent used much Caution in determining upon this invidious Article. It appointed no particular Honour, but only that due Honour and Worship be given to them: Yet when at the latter end of the Decree, it approves the second Nicene Council, and refers to it in the Article; it is too evident what kind of Honour and Worthip was intended; nor is it to be believed, that they designed to contradict an Opinion, at that time fo generally received, or openly recede from the determination of their great Aquinas. They very artfully endeavour to make this Doctrine feem to be what it is not, and fanfy they maintain it, by explaining it thus: This worship being not for the Image, but, for God's fake, passed through the Image, does not give divine Worship to it. But it may be asked, is it a divine Worship that is paid to the Image, or is it not? Is it the same which is offered to God? Or is it of another kind? If it be the same, then tho' it be not for the Image, but for God; yet it is for God, that divine Honour, is paid to the Image; which is as much as to fay, it is for God's fake, that what is due to God only, is offered to that which is not God; that is, for God's fake they commit Idolatry. And on the other hand, if it be not the same Worship, then how do they Worship God by the Image? THE PROPERTY.

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A good Man, in short, is a much nobler Image of God, than any Painter or Statuary can make: But if when we pay divine Worship to a good Man, we are guilty of Idolatry; much more are we guilty when we pay it to an Image; which does not fo nearly refemble him. This Instance may ferve to take off the trifling Distinction of relative, and terminative Worship. For if we should offer Sacrifice to a Man, build Temples, and erect Altars to him; it would not ferve our turns to fay, that we do all this to God, whose Image this Man bears, or that we intend these Honours to God sinally. This certainly must be Idolatry. But it may be further observed, that tho' the distinction above-mentioned is of great Service to the Inventers and Maintainers of it, as it renders the Question difficult to the Weak and Superstitious, and affords to themfelves the better opportunity of removing Scruples: Yet they do pay, and openly profess to pay divine Worship to that which is no God: Which may be thus proved. The Crofs on which Christ suffered, is but a Creature; but to the Image of this Cross they pay a relative divine Honour; therefore to the Exemplar, that Cross whereof the others are Images, they terminate the divine Worship paid to it. This is plainly afferted somewhere by Jacobus Almain; the same Honour. Honour is owing to the Image and the Exemplar. And therefore the Images of the Trinity, of Christ, and of the Cross, are to be adored with the worship of Latria; that

is, with divine Worship.

But next to the Realons taken from the Nature of the Thing, the Practice of the Primitive Christians, and the Ecclesiastical Laws, will give us the greatest Insight into the lawfulness or unlawfulness of worshipping God by an Image. The Primitive Christians fo abhorred the worshipping God by an Image, or Representation, that they industriously avoided the having any in their Churches. And what Lampridius fays in the Life of Alexander Severus, is very remarkable; that when Adrian had commanded Churches to be built without Images, it was conjectured he defigned them for the Service of Christ. This I take to be a clear and strong Proof of the Doctrine and Behaviour of those first Christians in this Point. As to the Ecclesiaffical Laws; the Council of Eliberis in Spain, made a Canon, \* that Pictures must not be in Churches, lest that which is adored or worshipped; should be painted upon the Walls. Thus likewise the Fathers of yn. 7. the fourth Council of Constantinople, quoted Ad 6.

<sup>\*</sup> Placuit Picturas in Ecclesia esse non debere, ne quod colitur, oc. Eliber. Can. 36.

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the words of Epiphanius, as we may learn from the Acts of the second Nicene Council in these words; Take heed to your selves, and retain the Traditions ye have received, decline not to the right Hand, nor to the left: And remember, my dear Sons, that ye introduce not Images into the Churches, nor into the Cometeries of the Saints; but by Remembrance place God in your Hearts. To the same purpose it was decreed by another Synod at Constantinople, consisting of 338 Bishops, under Constantius Copronymus; prohibiting all use of Images in Churches or not in Churches; and fo much of their De-

cree as prohibited the worshipping of Images, was followed by Charles the Great, and the learned Men of that Age, and confirmed by a Synod at Francfort, whither the Bishops of Italy, France, and Germany, were convened to that purpose. To these, if we add the Council of Mentz, and the second Council of Sens, which ordered Populum moneri ne Imagines adoret, that the People should be admonished not to worship Images; we have

For these Reasons we may conclude, that neither God nor Nature, neither Reason nor Religion, introduced Images into the worship of God; but that they got into Use from the Weakness and Superstition of some, or

fufficient Proof of the Christian Doctrine, and

Usages of the best Men and the best Times.

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from the mean villainous Arts of others. And it is no inconfiderable Argument against the Use or Conveniency of them, that they who are most deeply concerned in the Defence of them, never fay, that the Use of them is either enjoined by God, or prove, that to worship God by them, is more acceptable to him, than to pay him divine Honours without them. Besides, all the Religions that ever God instituted are directly against Image worship: And, in a word, if the Testimony of those many great Men, who affirm, that all the Precepts in the two Tables of Mofes, but that of the Sabbath, are in themfelves moral, or proceed from the Law of Nature, is of any Force; we may certainly pronounce the Doctrine of worshipping God by Images, to be directly against the Law of Nature too.

Of the Jewish Sabbath and the Lord's Day.

The Precept of the Sabbath is one Instance more to verify the Rule under Consideration. Now God instituted the Sabbath for many Reasons: As that it might be a perpetual Memorial of the Creation, and that himself might be glorifyed in the Work of his Hands, by the Religion of that Day; and in order to keep up the Memory of their Deliverance from Captivity in the Land of Egypt, Deut. v. 14. and that some tolerable

ble Ease and Remission from daily Labour, might be allowed to Servants and Slaves. These are Reasons for which God gave the Precept relating to the Sabbath: But it cannot follow from hence, that there was a natural Morality in observing that Day; because those Precepts which are given for a temporary Reason, cannot lay Men under an eternal Obligation. The Jewish Sabbath therefore, which was instituted for Reasons which might cease, and which actually have ceased, might be, and indeed is, wholly abro-

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gated.

But tho' it be absolutely necessary that some Time must be set apart for the Worship of God, and accordingly, among Christians, that which is called the Lord's Day, is appointed for his more immediate Service; yet this doth not properly fucceed in the Place of the Sabbath, but is entirely of Ecclesiastical, or human Institution. It was not introduced in obedience to the fourth Commandment; for the Christians, for a great many Years together, observed the Day prescribed in that Commandment. They did not think there was any thing moral in observing the Lord's Day, above any other Day, only as that was the time they had fet a part for the more immediate worship of God; which they were naturally and morally obliged to do; but which they might as well have command-

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ed to be done on any other Day. For it is impossible to assign a natural or a moral Reason, why one Day in seven should be set apart for the Service of God, rather than one Day in six, or in Ten: For as it doth not naturally sollow, that, God having on the seventh Day ceased from the Work of Creation, we are therefore to keep the seventh Day holy; so neither could we possibly have known it, but by Revelation: From whence it evidently sollows, that all the Morality that ever was in the keeping that Day, was derived, not from natural Reasons, but from

mere positive Institution.

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However, in imitation of the Reasonableness and Piety of that Law, and in Commemoration of a much greater Benefit than was there recorded; a Day of more folemn Religion, was instituted and observed by the Christian Church. For as on the Sabbath the Jews remembred the Creation, and their Redemption from Egypt; fo on the Lord's Day, the Christians commemorated the Works of God, their Redemption from Sin, Hell, and the Grave. Now it may be fairly fupposed, that the Reasons for observing the Sabbath, were to yield to those stronger ones for keeping the Lord's Day; as the Light of a lester Star, is lost in the Glories of the Sun; and tho' it be there, yet it appears not to the

the Eye, whose whole Capacity is taken up

with a greater and stronger Lustre.

And that we are wholly discharged from the Observation of the Sabbath, is expressly affirmed by St. Paul, who says, that Feasts, new Moons, and Sabbath-days, and Meats, and Drinks, are but the Shadow of things to come, but the Body is of Christ, Colos. ii. 16. The Primitive Christians indeed, as was observed, did meet publickly on the Jewish Sabbaths; but they did not think themselves obliged to it by the fourth Commandment, which they affirmed to be ceremonial only, and no part of the moral Law, as may be seen in Irenaus, Tertullian, Origen, St. Cyprian, and others.

When therefore the Obligation Men were under to the Jewish Sabbath ceased, the Christian Liberty, like the Sun, after the Dispersion of the intervening Clouds, appeared in its full Splendor. Then the Division and distinction of Days ceased, and as St. Paul argues in his Epistle to the Galatians, one Day was not more holy than another. But the there was no natural Holiness in any Day; yet it was always thought proper, to commemorate the great Blessings of God, which had been conferred upon certain Days. And the all the Christian Church that observed the Sunday Festival, did it in remembrance of our Lord's Resurrection;

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yer, that the Day in which it was thus remembred, was not more holy than another Day, or naturally necessary to be observed, appears evidently from the Practice of all the Eastern Churches and all the Disciples of St. John, who celebrated the Feast of our Lord's Refurrection; I mean the Anniversary, the great Feast which was the Measure of all the rest, not upon that Day of the Week on which he rose from the Dead, but on the Day of the Full Moon, whenever it should happen. Which plainly demonstrates, that the observation of the Day on which Christ rose from the Dead, was not of Divine or Apostolick Institution. The Memory of the Bleffing, indeed, was to last for ever: But we are under no natural Obligation to observe the Anniversary; the' the Circumstance of its being the yearly returning Day, might render it proper and conveentered for the Ends of Religion, and tanin

The Observation therefore of that particular Day which we call the Lord's Day, being not enforced upon Men by any Law of God, but merely by humane Laws; it may possibly be asked, how are we to celebrate this Day? To this I answer, that as the Jewish manner of observing it was with a perfect Rest; so the Christian manner consists in an excellent Religion and Devotion. They were to abstain only from such Works

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on that Day, as were inconsistent with the Duties they were obliged to perform. This was the only Rest in which the Christians were on that Day to indulge themselves; for even their bodily Labour, on that Day, was fanctified, if it was laid out in Acts of publick of private Benefit, or Charity. And it is certain in Fact, that the Primitive Christians, even in the Times of Persecution, when they more feverely observed all the divine Commands, did all manner of Work on the Lord's Day; which they would not have done, had they thought themselves commanded by God, not to do any. And therefore when the Emperor Constantine had published an Edict against working upon the Lord's Day; yet he excepted and allowed of Agriculture, of the Labours peculiar to Hufbandmen.

The Rest of this Day was so wholly calculated for the Ends of Religion, and so imimediately related to the publick Services of the Church, and, considered absolutely in it self, was so far from being any part of the Duty of the Day, that many of the Fathers have affirmed it to be better to follow our ordinary Occupations on that Day, than to be idle and do nothing.

Church do not take up the whole Day, we may, upon just Cause, do any manner of Work,

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which is neither forbidden by our Superiours, nor scandalous to our Brethren, in those Hours of the Day which are unemployed. Now the Lord's Day being fet apart by the Church for the publick Duties of Religion, ought to be employ'd as the Church enjoins. And tho' it would be very Pious, not only to attend the publick Offices, but also to be more taken up in our private Devotions, on that Day, than on other Days, yet the Church does not oblige us to it. The Question therefore concerning particular Works or the Permission of Recreations, is wholly trifling and useless. For the Law has plainly determined Quod Lege probibitoria vetitum non est permissum intelligitur. That which is not forbidden in the negative Precept, is understood to be permitted. But as it would be neither Pious or Prudent, for fome Persons, on that Day, to indulge themfelves in great Liberties of Sport and Diverfion; fo neither would it be just or charitable, always to deny others, some proportion of it. The Plowman fits still in the Church, and the Priest labours: The wearied Man is indulged in some Recreations, which are denied to others, who need them not: And there is no violation of any Command of God, tho' the Day, for some pious and worthy Considerations, should be, by fome Persons, less strictly observed. Thus I have considered the two great Exceptions which are in the Decalogue, and yet are not parts of the moral Law; but all the rest are natural Precepts of eternal Obligation. But for a Supplement to this Rule, and to explain some Questions which may arise concerning the Matter of the divine Laws, and their respective Obligations; it will not be improper to enumerate those Marks and Characteristicks, by which we may unerringly discover, what Precepts are

moral, and what are not.

1. All moral Laws are fuch, whose first and immediate Measures are natural Reason: But of Precepts not moral, the Reason may be either Ecconomical, or Political, arifing from an Accident, or some new State or Condition, and the like. That we are to obey our Parents, is a moral Law. This we know naturally and from our very Being; and need not the Instructions and Reasons of other Men to fatisfy our own. Love and Obedience, in regard to Children, are but Gratitude and Necessity. For Children come into the World weak and helpless, and live upon the Love and Care of Parents. They derive their Natures and their Birth, their Education and Sublistance from them; and confequently, owe them all That for which any Man can be obeyed and loved. And if we consider farther, that Children are a part

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of the Parents; that the Parents are bleffed or curled in them; that they feel a strong natural Affection towards them; that Patents are more wife, more powerful, prior in Point of Time, and, in every respect, more considerable; that Children cannot at first, either understand, act, or speak, and that therefore naturally they must be under the care of those who can; that no Man will give up his Right without just Reason, and the Reasons of Subjection, being some of them natural, and some perpetual, and all of them leaving behind them the strongest Motives to Gratitude and Endearment, cannot be obliterated, but must leave an indelible Impression: It must from hence natural ly and necessarily follow, that Children are obliged to pay their Parents the Duties of Love and Obedience.

2. That, of which no Reason can be given, cannot be a moral Precept. For moral Laws, being also natural, are perfective of our Nature, and provide for our natural Wants, and prescribe the Measure of gratifying our natural Appetites. They are such, in short, in which all Mankind plainly and distinctly feels a Benefit. For this Reason, neither Sacraments, nor Sacramentals are reckoned at mong moral Laws; for they deriving their whole Force from divine, positive Institution, the Reasons for which are frequently kept

kept secret and unrevealed; we can neither naturally know, nor naturally assent to them, nor are we bound to observe them any longer than to the expiration of that Period, thro'

which they were defigned to last.

3. The Confequences of natural Reason, are no certain Indications of a moral Commandment. For, moral Laws are few, founded upon clear, distinct Reason, such as appears fo to all discerning Persons. But if we were to follow every artful Deduction which cunning Men might draw from a natural Reafon, we might be eternally bewilder'd and unhappy. And in Fact, the Observations, which Men make upon a natural Reason, are so deceitful and fo fallible, that God's Wisdom and Goodness would never put our eternal Interest upon the Disputations and Decisions of Men. Some, for Instance, have contended, that it is a Confequence of the Law of Nature, that spiritual Persons should be exempt from the Civil Jurisdiction: But because they prove this only by fome Proportions of Nature, by the natural distinction between Spiritual and Civil, or by two or three remote uncertain Confequences; we are to lay no stress upon it. Nor indeed can we possibly imagine there is any Force in this Argument, unless we have forgot, that our bleffed Lord, the Head of all spiritual Power, was yet Subject to the Civil Magistrate; and that neither himfelf, him give inde

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himfelf, nor his Apostles, have any where given the least hints to encourage an absolute

independence upon him.

4. When God prescribes a Law, and gives a Reason for it; tho' the Reason be in it self eternal, yet it does not infer the morality of the Law, unless it relates rather to the Nature of the Thing, than to the Power of him who gives it. When God commanded the Children of Israel to give him the suffic Born, or to redeem it, he gives this Reason for it, I am the Lord, Numb, iii. 12. Now tho' this Reason be eternal, yet it does not point out the morality of the Precept, so much as the absolute Power and Dominion of God, by virtue of which he might enjoin what Commands he pleased.

a moral Law, are not equally moral and necessary, with the original Law from whence they were taken. That those who serve at the Altar, should be Partakers of the Altar, is a moral Law, as it arises from the natural and essential Principles of Justice and Religion. Thus the fewish Priests did eat of the Sacrifice, and were maintained by Tythes and Offerings. But the these were the ways in which the fews observed this moral Law; yet these very Instances of the manner of observing it, are not moral and eternal, because they might naturally have U 2 obeyed

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obeyed this Law as well, by fulfilling it in other ways of providing for their Priests.

6. The strong, violent, and firm Persuasions of Confcience in particular Persons, or in some Communities of Men, is not a sufficient Indication of a moral Law. The weak Brother, whom St. Paul mentions, thought it an Impiety to eat Flesh; but he was abufed. And there are at this time, great numbers of People, who cannot, on the Lord's Day, conscientiously dress Meat, or come into any kind of Recreation, tho' never fo generally allowed, or never fo innocent. Now when fuch a Perfuasion makes a Sect, and finds bold and zealous Defenders; it will in a little time dwell upon the Conscience, as if it were a Native there, tho' at the same time it is but an importunate, and bold Intruder, and ought to be turned out of Doors.

7. The Behaviour of Heathens, in a Matter which God had not expressly obliged them to perform, is no Proof, that what they did in that Instance, was in Consequence of the Light of Nature, or a Duty of a moral Commandment. The Heathens paid Tythes to Hercules, kept Holy the Seventh Day, and forbad fecond Marriages to their holy Persons. But there is no Necessity upon this Account, of believing that these Actions were to them Matters of natural, or ne-

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cessary Duty. As God never expressly laid these Duties upon them, nor no Evidence of Nature or Reason, could shew them that they were directly necessary; we may suppose the grand Reason why they performed them, to have been, from their having observed something like them in neighbouring Nations, or in those with whom they had any Commerce. But Consent can be no Argument, if it arises only from Imitation.

8. Tho' God should annex the Penalty of Death to the breach of a Law; yet that does not necessarily infer the Morality of that Law. To gather Sticks on the Sabbath, to omit Circumcision, to approach a Wife when it should be with her after the manner of Women, were forbidden by the greatest Penalty; yet they had not the greatest Obligation, as being neither natural, nor moral

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9. When two Laws demand our Obedience at such a time, when it is impossible to obey more than one; that which has the least of Morality in it, is to give place to the other. The legal Observation of the Sabbath, and the doing Works of Charity, did often interfere in the Course of our Saviour's Life: But we find, that he constantly made the Sabbath give way to Charity.

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But notwithstanding these Rules of discerning between thele Laws; which in all the Laws of God are moral, or not moral; the best and surest Refort is still to the Scriptures of the New Testament; wherein whatfoever is commanded to all Mankind, is either moral in it felf, or is rendered fo by Adoption; which last Clause I insert up. on the score of the Sacraments, and some glorious Appendages of Morality, and heroical Acts of Charity commanded by Christ: The Observation of which, tho' it be not strictly moral, or of prime natural Necesfity; yet because it is laid upon us by Christ, whose Law is to oblige us as long as the Sun or Moon endureth; to us Christians, and to all to whom the Notice of the Excellency of those Laws shall come, it is all one, in Point of Duty, and will not, in the Event of Things, be distinguished from That, which is in it felf moral. la a time, when it is

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There is no state of Men or Things, but is to be guided by the Proportion of some Rules or Precepts in the Christian Law.

Where there is no Law to lay Restraint upon us, we may do what we please: But where we are tyed up to Rules and Measures, we have no Lawgiver that can oblige us but God, who in these tast Days, bath spoken to us by his Son; who, as he is the Author and Finisher of our Faith, so, we are to believe he hath taught us all his Father's Will. We pray, that his Will may be done on Earth, as it is in Heaven; which suppoles, that he ought to rule our Wills here, fince it is certain, he rules all above. the Duty of Mankind lies in Religion, Justice, and Sobriety. God, by his Son, hath given us many Laws relating to these Things, and none which do not relate to them. If therefore our Lord be a perfect Lawgiver, his Law alone must be the Rule of our Duty and Obedience: But if he be not a perfect Lawgiver, where shall we go to find out the Will of God? Or discover a sure Place whereon to fet our Foot?

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The Refult of these Reflections is, that we are to take all the Laws of Good and Evil from the Evangelical Lines. Right Reafon indeed may discover the Measures of Things; but it makes no Laws, unless it be conducted by a competent Authority. Nothing therefore ought to be condemned which Christ permits, or be permitted, which he condemns.

Under this Rule, it may properly be enquir'd, whether it can be lawful for a Prince or Common-Wealth, to permit any thing to the publick Necessities of the People, which is prohibited by the Laws of Jesus Christ?

To this I answer, that if the Question means, whether in any Cases there may be actual Impunity, there is no Doubt but there may: For sometimes it is absolutely necessary, as when a Multitude fins; for in that Case to cut off all the Offenders would be a Remedy much worse than the Disease. But if by Impunity be understood a legal Impunity, it must either fignify that a Law shall warrant the Action, or that it shall, before the Commission of it, promise Indemnity. If it warrant the Action, which is forbidden by the Evangelical Law, it erects a Government against the Law of Christ: If it condemns the Action, but at the fame time promises Indemnity, it reproaches it felf, and confesses its own weakness. But

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the present State of Affairs, absolutely necessary. Thus it is necessary, that in all Communities of Men there be borrowing and lending. But if this cannot be without Usury, tho' Usury were, of it self, uncharitable, yet the Commonwealth might promise not to punish it. And tho' Usury may be said to be unlawful, as far as it is uncharitable; yet when it becomes absolutely necessary, as is here supposed, it is comparatively charitable. For if to lend upon Usury can possibly be more charitable, than not to lend at all; to lend, is, in some fort, a Charity.

2. Impunity may be promifed to any Thing prohibited by the Law of Christ, in such Cases, where we are uncertain, whether what we permit, be really permitted, or not permitted. Thus it frequently is in Questions of Religion; wherein, no doubt, there are many determinations given contrary to the Truth of God. But yet they may be permitted, in as much as there are great Probabilities produced on both sides: And no one is sit to punish the Error, but he, who is absolutely certain, and can demonstrate to

others, that himself is not deceived.

3. Whatsoever is against the Law of Jefus Chrift, in any Instance, may not be directly permitted for the procuring any greater good; but only for the avoiding a greater Evil, which is otherwise inevitable. Thus a Prince, being fully perfuaded, that to fuffer the Doctrine of Transubstantiation, is against the Laws of Christ, is not to permit it, tho' the Parties concerned in it, promise to pay all the Gabels of the Nation, and raife an Army to defend it: But if a Rebellion cannot be otherwise prevented, it is lawful for this Reason, because, when two Evils are before me, but neither of them of my procuring, I am innocent if I fuffer either; I am wife if I chuse the least, and am guiltless of any Crime, because I am but a suffer-ing Person. Whereas, if I do it to obtain a greater Good, I chuse the Evil directly, because I am not forced to pursue the greater Good.

4. When any fuch unavoidable Evil is permitted against the Laws of Christ, it is by fome means fo far to be discouraged, that the necessary Impunity may not so strongly encourage the Evil, as the Cenfure may abate But because generally Impunity is the greatest Encouragement to Sin, and, next to the Pleasure or Interest of it, the strongest Temptation; we must take all the Care we can, that That which serves the Interest of the

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the Republick, may not be prejudicial to the Souls of Men, by annexing to the unavoidable Evil, all the other Discouragements we are able.

These are some of the general Restrictions, under which, all Impunity of Evil is not

to be condemned.

However, against the Doctrine of the Rule it self, there seem to lie a great many Objections; which may be taken from many Cases, for which the Laws of the Holy Jesus have made no Provision. War, with all the great Cases and Incidents of it, may be brought as an Instance. For since it is disputable, whether Christianity allows of War, but very certain, that it says nothing of it expressly, nor gives any particular Rules concerning it; it will seem to be a Casus omission in the Law. Upon this Point may arise several Considerations.

#### Of the Measures of War, by Christ's Law.

1. If it be faid, that War is wholly unlawful, and against the express Lines of our Religion: This indeed would remove the present difficulty, but not without involving the whole Christian World in many more. 2. If it be said that our Religion leaves the Assairs of War to be managed wholly by the Laws of Nature and Nations: We shall find that this Account will but embarrass the Enquiry, and

and never let us into any Light or Certainty. For if the Christian Law be (as has been proved) a perfect Digest of the Law of Nature; to fay that Matters of War are to be conducted by natural Laws, is not to remove them from under the Cognizance of the Christian Law, because they are both the same. If therefore in the Laws of Christ there are no Rules of War, neither can there be any in the Laws of Nature. And besides this, if the Laws of Nature concerning War, be not fet down in the Gospel, and that therefore we are to look for them in the Tables of our own Hearts, wherein we find fuch horrible Disorders, introduced by Passion, by Interest, by Custom, by Education; we shall find the Law of Nature a strange Thing, if we draw it from thence only, and from thence took our Rules of War, which is fo very dissonant to the excellent and perfective Laws of Nature. 3. But if it be faid, that War is to be ordered by the Measures of Peace, we fay what, in the Nature of Things, is impossible to be true. And if it be faid, that right Reason ought to be the Rule of it; it may be answered, that if right Reason were to be heard, there would be no War at all: And fince one Party begins the War against Reason, it is not probable, that for any Reason that can be urged, he will give pp his Advantage. Besides, in these Cases, whole whof

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way Law is a whose Reason shall judge? And whose Ar-

guments shall determine?

Amidst these Difficulties, the Point that we can most reasonably rely upon, is this; that Christianity hath made no particular express Provisions for the management of War, because it hath so guarded all the Actions of Men; hath fo ordered their Religion; hath taken fuch care, that all Men should be just; hath prescribed Laws so perfect, Rules fo excellent, Threatnings fo fevere, and Promiles fo engaging, that nothing but the perverse Will of Men can obstruct the Happiness of Mankind. It would be absurd therefore for the injurious Person, to inquire how he ought to proceed in War, fince he is already gone beyond all Laws, into a Condition of Things, where Laws are of but little value. But for the injured Person, he is to behave as well as he can, as having one Measure of Action, and another of Defence.

As to his Defence, that is not to be meafured by Laws, but by Privileges: That is, Things having on one fide, exceeded the Laws of Nature, he is left to the use of his natural Powers and Desensatives, and without any Restriction, to desend himself, and drive away the Injury. For there being no divine Law to sorbid him to desend himself, he is at Liberty to preserve and exert those Rights, Rights, which every Man is naturally post-

But then if it be asked, what is the Meafure of those Actions, which are to be performed in the Defence of an injured Prince or Government; or how can they be meafured by Christians, if Christ hath left no Laws relating to them? I answer, that the Measure of our publick Actions, is no other than That of our private Actions; fince the fame Rule of Justice ought to be observed between Princes and between private Perfons. They are equally obliged to do as they would be done to, to observe Covenants, to perform their Promises, to hurt no innocent Person, whom they can preserve; and to preserve themselves, they must keep within the Limits of a just Defence. And as in private Contentions, and Affertions of Right, we must endeavour only to procure Justice, and do nothing inconsistent with Charity; or, are to affert our own Rights, without doing our Adversary Wrong, by a too angry or passionate Defence of them: Just so it ought to be in the Behaviour of Princes. For as Contracts entered into by a Multitude, are to be governed by the same Justice, as a Contract between two Men only: So in the Contentions of a Multitude, two and two thousand make no difference in the the

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the Equity of the Rule, but only in fome accidental Circumstances of the Matter."

And here it may be seasonable to examine, whether the Precedents in the Old Testament are so far imitable, by those who engage in Wars, that they can pass into a Law? Or, if not, whether they are safe or no? And tho' the Instance in which I chuse to consider this Question, relate only to War; yet it may be of use in many other Cases; since there are some who think every thing imitable they find in the Scriptures; and others, who think nothing safe or warrantable which is not there.

1. It is very certain, that not every Thing done in the Old Testament is a warrant for us. I instance in all the Acts of Injustice, the Violences, the Rapines, the open Infringement of natural Rights, concerning which there needs no further Disquisition. 2. The Actions of good Men there recorded, are not a fufficient Warrant for our Imitation, not only when they are condemned, but even when they are mention'd without Cenfure. For as we are not to imitate David's Murder and Adultery; fo neither are we to persuade another to tell a Lie for us, as he persuaded Jonathan to fay he was gone to Bethlehem, when he only went into the Fields. And tho' we do not find that Jacob was charged with any Guilt in being Husband Husband to two Sisters at one time; yet this would not extenuate the Guilt of fuch an Action in Christians, who are conducted by a more excellent Spirit, taught by a more perfect Institution, governed by a severer Law, under the last and supreme Lawgiver; and therefore ought to shew a greater and feverer Virtue. 3. The Actions of Men in the Old Testament, tho' attested and furthered by the Providence of God, are no Warrant for our Practice, nor can they make an authentick Precedent. I mention the Fact of Feroboam who rebelled against the House Tho' God was the Author of of Solomon. that alteration, and by his Providence ordered the Event; yet Jeroboam had certain Rules to go by, which if he had observed, God would by other Means have executed his Defign, and Jeroboam would not have become a Prodigy, and a Proverb of Impie-4. Actions done in the Old Testament, tho' by an express Command from God, are not justifiable Precedents to us, unless we are under the same express Command. Jehu, by the Command of God, took up Arms against the House of Abab: But tho' our Prince be wicked, we are not, without fuch an express Command, to lift up our Hands against him. 5. Examples in War are ever the most dangerous and uncertain Precedents; not only because Men in a state of War are more

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more violent and unreasonable than at other Times; but because the Rules of War are the most uncertainly described, the Necessities contingent and numerous, and the Reafon of the Action depending upon a multitude of Circumstances, is the less intelligible. David forced the Ammonites to pass under Saws and Harrows of Iron; and perhaps he had a Reason for it: But it would be a poor Reason for imitating an Action which appears very cruel and inhuman, for Christian Soldiers to fay, they did it only because David did it., 6. But when a Law is changed, the Examples taken from that Law, lose all their Influence, and cannot make an imitation of them just or necessary. A private Man, among the Jews, might transfix his Brother or his Father, if either of them tempted him to Idolatry; and in the Cause of God, they might do Justice by a private Hand. But these Actions are no Examples to Christians; For when that Priesthood was changed, that Law was changed also; and in Confequence of that, these Actions, of lawful became unlawful, and therefore were not to be imitated. Our Lord's Disciples would fain have done as Elias did: But Christ instructed them, that he was not imitable in That, in letting them know that the Spirit, the great Instrument, or Principal of Action, was wholly changed. X

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As to the Example of Jesus Christ, and how far that ought to be imitated, may be best declared by this short Rule. In whatsoever he has given us a Commandment, in that only we are bound to imitate him: but in what seever he proposed to us as excellent, in that also we may imitate him. This Rule fixes the whole Rule of Conscience in this Point: For our Saviour being an extraordinary Person, was to do some extraordinary Things, in which, either we cannot, or ought not, to imitate him. He underwent a Fast of Forty Days; we cannot: He whipped the Buyers and Sellers out of the Temple; but a Christian may not do an Action of this kind without a publick Authority. But then, as Christ must be imitated in all Matter of Duty, and is imitable in the Degrees of Duty, but that, as to the bare Circumstantials of each Duty, we are left wholly to our Liberty: So likewise it is in Things of his own Ordinance and Institution, wherein the Religion is to be obeyed, the Defign to be observed and promoted, and the Essentials of the Observation to be religiously preserved; but in the Circumstances, which have no necessary Relation to the Nature of the Rite, or to the Religion, we are under no Obligation; nor are we obliged in point of Love, Duty, or Advantage, to imitate herein the Behaviour of our bleffed As

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bleffed Lord. Thus, to celebrate the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper with Bread and Wine, to do it in memory of his Death, to do it as he commanded, in Obedience to him. to receive it from the Hands of the Ministers of his Religion; is a matter of Duty, Love, and Obedience; but to imagine that we are fo nicely to imitate the Actions, and the Circumstances of the Actions of our Lord, as that we are necessarily obliged to take it in unleavened Bread, to mix Water with the Wine. to receive it in Wines of Judea; lying or leaning on a Bed, or to take it after Supper: is fo far from being a Matter of Love and Duty, or a commendable Imitation of Christs that it feems to be rather mimical and theatrical, a Snare to Consciences, and an Abuse of Religion. It is rather Adulation than Love, to lay fo much stress upon the imitating our Lord in those Things, wherein he has never propounded himself as imitable; or demanded our Obedience. For what Instance of Religion or Morality was concerned in the Circumstance of Christ's eating this Supper at Supper time? Or in the drinking the Wine of his own Country? Or, according to the Custom of fober Men, in diluting the Wine with a mixture of Water? How could these Things become Matters of necesfary Religion or Imitation, when they are merely incidental, or the Circumstances on-X 2

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ly of some of the ordinary Actions of

Let us now enquire into the positive Meafures of Example, and fee what Examples

may be fafely followed.

1. That Example is fafe, whose Action is warranted by God's Bleffing. Thus the Piety of the Ægyptian Midwives is justly imitable, who refused to murder the Lord's Peodle at the Command of Pharaoh; for it is faid, therefore did God build them Houses. I do not mean, that whatfoever is bleffed or prosperous is imitable; for that very Action which bleffes or makes a Man prosper in this World, may damn him in the next: But only, that whatfoever God fays he rewards with a Bleffing, that, in equal Circumstances,

may be fafely imitated.

2. But because our Imitation of those Examples which are not strengthened and recommended by some certain Rules, is not a direct, but only a collateral Duty, not a Matter of direct Obedience, but only of Fame and Reputation, or the Care we ought to take of providing Things honest in the sight of all Men, therefore such Examples only ought to be followed, as are of good Re-He ought not to be called a just Perfon, who invades his Neighbour's Rights, or dispossesses another People who live at Peace, upon Pretence that Nimrod, who was an infamous

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famous Man, did so. But when Joshua preserved the Gibeonites alive, in regard to the
Oath he sware to them, notwithstanding they
had deceived him; and yet made them Slaves
to his People: He may safely be imitated
both in one part, and in the other; and
tho' we may not break our words upon pretence we are deceived, yet we may do all
that we can justly do for the Interest and
Safety of our Relatives; and may justify
our selves herein from the Example of Joshua,
whose Character is intire and illustrious, and
who is universally thought a brave and worthy Man.

3. We must carefully distinguish the Examples of Things lawful, from the Examples of Things good and just. We may always imitate These, but are to follow Those cautiously. Not only because what was lawful in the Old Testament, is not always lawful in the New; but because what is always lawful, is not always fit to be done. But then let every Example be proportioned to the Question: As, if it be asked, whether or no this Action be holy? An Example that only declares it lawful, does not come up to the Question: But if it be enquired, whether it be lawful? An Example proving it is holy, more strongly infers its being lawful.

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4. When evident Marks of Piety appear in the Example, it gives the stronger Warrant to an Imitation. Thus our Lord, in his Apology for his Disciples, appealed to the Example of David, eating the shew Bread. To them indeed the great Force of the Argument arose from the Fame and Character of the Patriarch; but our Saviour knew that David omitted a Ceremony, in order to perform an Act of Piety and great Charity to his hungry Followers. But yet David's Action only was not Christ's Warrant; but the Piety of the Thing it self was sufficient Warrant to them both.

#### CHAP. III.

Of the Interpretation and Obligation of the Laws of JESUS CHRIST.

#### RULE I.

In Negative Precepts, the Affirmatives are commanded; and in the Affirmative Commandments, the Negatives are included.

he who authoritatively expounds it, becomes to us a Lawgiver: And all, who believe

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qui firi It believe in God, and his Son Jesus Christ, own themsel es Subjects of the Christian Laws; but tho' all consess themselves equally obliged and equally desirous to obey, yet all do not obey alike: For Men, by a wrong or impersect Interpretation of the Laws, become a Law unto themselves or orders, prescribing Measures which our Lord never intended. But as Error in these things is of very dangerous consequence, I shall endeavour to lay down some plain and rational Measures of Interpretation.

It is observable that in the Decalogue, and indeed in the whole Law of Moses, there are more negative Precepts than affirmative. In the Decalogue particularly, all the moral Precepts, but one, (I do not here reckon the Observation of the Sabbath among them) are negative: That only of Obedience to our Superiors is not a negative Pre-

cept.

On the other hand, the Precepts of Christ are positive and affirmative, as is plain from his Sermon on the Mount, the Summary of his Law; wherein, when he explained the negative Precepts of Moses, he still superadded an affirmative of his own: So that it would be to little purpose to enquire whether, in the Mosaic Law the Affirmatives were included in the Negatives. It is indeed certain that the Pharisees did X 4

not understand them so, nor were they always involved in the nature of each other; nor were the Promises of that Law sufficient to inforce and encourage the Practice of good Works, tho' the fear of Punishment should be enough to restrain the Evil. But that which now concerns the Confcience is plain and evident. In the Law of Fesus Christ, the negative and affirmative are correlatives, and mutually infer each other. Thus we find it express'd, Whose looketh on a Woman to lust after her, hath committed Adultery. This was our Lord's Commentary on the fixth Commandment, which was negative. So again, refift not Evil, is the negative Precept; to which Christ adds, if any Man sue Thee at the Law, and takes thy Coat, let him have thy Chak also. So in the matter of Oaths, He faid, swear not at all, adding a more severe Negative to the Negative of the Law: but then he adjoins his own affirmative, let your Communication be yea, yea; nay, nay; that is, let it be plain and simple, meek, eafy, and ingenuous.

As to the latter Part of the Rule, that, in the affirmative Precepts, the negative is included; there is no other Difficulty but This; that we take Care that the Negative be opposed to the Affirmative in Relation only to the same Subject; For, because we

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are obliged to love our Friends, therefore we must not hate them; but it does not follow as the Pharisees falsely expounded this Precept, that, because we are to love our Friends, therefore we must hate our Enemies. For here, the Negative and Assirmative relate not to the same, but to different Subjects.

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When a Negative and an Affirmative seem opposite in any sense, the Affirmative is to be expounded by the Negative, not the Negative by the Affirmative.

Thus are these different Expressions of our Saviour to be understood; Unless ye eat the Flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his Blood, ye have no Life in you: And He that eateth the Flesh of the Son of Man, hath Life abiding in him. Now to Those, who contend that these Words relate to the sacramental Manducation, the Question will be, whether it be necessary to drink the Blood, as well as to eat the Flesh? For the exclusive Negative in the former Expression requires Both; and yet in the other, Life is promised to him that eateth the Flesh, without mentioning the Blood.

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Now this Question is answered by this Rule. For if the Affirmative were, in this

Case,

Case, sufficient when the Negative expressly requires more, then the Affirmative were directly contrary to the Negative; which we cannot fafely suppose. Besides, in matters of Duty, whatfoever is any where required, is every where supposed; and tho' all our Duty is not every where repeated, yet, the not repeating in any Place, cannot lessen its Obligation in that Place, where it is expressly requir'd. And tho' we are affured in Scripture that the pure in Heart shall see God; and that the poor in Spirit shall inherit the Kingdom of God; yet, if all that is required, be not put together in the Duty, the Reward will not be given to the Person thus partial in his Obedience.

#### RULE III.

In the affirmative and negative Precepts of Christ, not only what is in the Words of the Commandment, but what sever is symbolical or alike, is equally forbidden or commanded.

To the Enumeration of those Works of the Flesh, or Crimes of Men which are ordinarily provided against by human Laws; Galv. 21. St. Paul adds, & ra oposa rems, Things like to these. For there are some Crimes too shocking for the Ear; and these the Apostle

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hints at, when he fays, It is a shame even to name such Things as are done of them in secret. Now when all unnatural Lusts are prohibited, it is no part of the Persection of the Law to name every kind of Impurity which may possibly be committed, or to mention the Circumstances of that Vileness, which gets a new Name, upon every little variation of them.

There are some Crimes which Nature and the common Sentiments of Mankind do so universally condemn, that they need no special mention in the Laws. No Law prohibits the eating human Flesh; and yet the civil part of Mankind does hate and detest

those who do it.

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In consequence of this Rule, the Christians have a certain Demonstration of the Unlawfulness of Polygamy, or the having many Wives at one time. For our blessed Saviour said, He that putteth away his Wife, unless it be for Fornication, and marrieth another, committeth Adultery. He therefore must be certainly guilty of Adultery who marries another Woman, when his Wife is neither put away, nor hath committed Fornication. But in this and the like Cases, we are to act by the measures of Reason, and the common Usages of Laws.

1. A Law drawn from another Law, must naturally and evidently arise from it; or else

it must not be obtruded upon Men, as the Opinion and Intent of the Lawgiver. Obey them that have the Rule over you, is a plain Precept: But if it should be inferred, that with Regard to any Determination of your Rulers, you are to deny your Reason, and give up your Understanding; this can never hold, because we are obliged to obey them only in fuch Things, wherein they ought to govern us. God only hath a Right to affert an uncontroulable Power over our Understandings. 2. That which is not expressed in the Letter of the Law, is then supposed to be intended by the Law, when it is not artfully and laboriously, but naturally, easily, and evidently deduced from it. For Laws ought to be as few as possible; and he who prescribes Laws to himself, which Christ never intended, ignorantly lays a fnare for himfelf, and may do himself a Mischief by a Superstitious Care to avoid it. Christ Commands us to do our Alms, and pray, in secret. From hence it plainly follows, that all the pompous Solemnities, all the Trappings and Ornaments of Prayer, designed to indulge our Vanity, and procure the Applause of Men, are criminal. But if I proceed further, and fay, that therefore it is unlawful to appoint publick Assemblies for Prayer, at least, that it is unlawful to appear to Men passionate and devout; or should say, that private Prayer

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Ref the tho is better than Publick; that therefore it is to be preferred before publick Prayer, and that confequently, we may fafely neglect the affembling our selves together for Prayer: This, I lay, would be a Conclusion too forced, and ablurd, to carry in it the Force and Obligation of a Precept. 3. In deriving Duties from express Laws, the first Presump tion should be for Piety and the Honour of God: That is, the Obligation be not evident, yet, if it be plain that such Obedience is for the Honour of God, we may the more reasonably suppose, that such a Consequence might be intended by the Law of God, whom it so apparently ferves. But where this Circumstance does not appear, we are to prefume rather for our Liberty, than for the multiplication of Laws.

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# RULE IV.

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Where any thing is forbidden by the Laws of Jesus Christ, all those Things are forbidden also, which follow from that forbidden Action, and for whose sake it was forbidden.

The Laws of any Lawgiver, being the Result of his best Wisdom, are designed for the noblest End, the restraining of Evil. And the every particular Evil is not, cannot be specified,

or became it

supposed to be provided against and discouraged. Thus it is in the Laws of God. When we distribute Alms, we are commanded not to blow a Trumpet; which was a general Prohibition of Pride, so strongly arising in the Minds of Men, upon doing a beneficent or generous Action. But if, without the Instance there specified, we are really proud of having done it, or show our Pride in any other Instance, we as effectually transgress the Commandment, as if we proclaimed our charitable or generous Actions by the sound

of the Trumpet.

But this Rule hath two Limitations: It is not to be understood of Events which are accidental and contingent; but of fuch as are natural and necessary, foretold and threatned, or at least common, and remarkable. He who spreads false Doctrine in the Church, is answerable not only for the Herefy, but for the Mischief which he designs, or is willing it should produce. But if another Man, out of Malice, or to lessen his Reputation, should set up a contrary Herefy; tho' this Herefy certainly arose from the other; yet because it proceeded from it only accidentally, and upon a view, which the broacher of the former Herefy was an utter Stranger to; it cannot therefore be charged upon him, as a Sin. But any Effect which

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which naturally follows upon a forbidden Action, is, no doubt, wholly criminal. Thus he who divides the Church, is accountable for all the Evils, which, he knows, are the natural and necessary Consequences of So, if an imperious, haughty Woman, by a continual diffatisfiction and restlefness of Temper, Infolence and Ill-nature, disturbs her Husband's Quiet, robs him of the Ease of his Mind, and so occasions the Loss of his Health; she does not only violate the Laws of Love and Duty which she had vowed to her Husband, but is likewise guilty of his Murther, if he dies; or of any other less Mifery, which she knows, her Illnature keeps him under.

Whatsoever Event is foretold or threatned to a forbidden Action, is also imputed to him who does the prohibited Action. He who grieves the holy Spirit of God, and causes him to depart; is likewise answerable for that Beggary and Meanness of Soul, with which the contemptuous Treatment of the holy Spirit, is often punished. But if an evil Event, be not either natural, or threatned, yet, if it ordinarily and remarkably occurs, it is chargeable upon him, who commits the sorbidden Action, which occasions it. Thus it hath been frequently observed, that the Father's or Mother's Curse hath been attended with some terrible Missortune

upon the offending Child. He therefore who shall commit an Action which shall derive such a Curse upon himself, is not only justly punished; but, if upon his Account, the Evil should descend upon his Posterity, he is guilty of that Evil, and is directly a Sinner in their Punishment.

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The Laws of Jesus Christ, are the Measures of the Spirit, and are always to be extended to a spiritual signification.

Humane Laws can exact but the outward Action. They neither have fufficient Power over the Understanding, nor are they competent Judges of the Will: And yet, without these Powers, their Interest is well enough preserved. He who pays the Debt he owes me, does me Justice, tho' he pays it unwillingly; and therefore falls not under the Centure of the Magistrate. Thus the Pharisees understood the Law of Moses; and supposed that Man to be innocent, whom the Laws did not make guilty: And this was one Reason why Christ prescribed new and better Rules to Mankind. He who offers a pure Lamb to God, may dishonour him with a filthy Thought: And no Sacrifice is pure, barely from the Skin and Colour, but from the divin them Servi and t Pow fuppl

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the Heart of him who offers it. Acts of outward Religion are Publications of the divine Honours, but the Heart does only pay them. If They are but right with God, our Services will never be wanting or rejected; and tho' our Hearts may supply the want of Power, yet it is certain, that nothing can

fupply the want of our Hearts.

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This then is the first Sense of this Rule, that the Obedience which Christ demands, is a fincere Obedience of the Will; and that we are not satisfied with the bare external Action. He who distributes Alms to the Poor, and yet curses them in his Heart; or entertains an Apostle in the Name of an Apostle, and grudges him the Charge of his Diet, is neither charitable nor hospitable, nor will he find the Reward of an Apostle, or a Brother.

This Rule further intends, that the whole Design of the Laws of Jesus Christ, is to render his Religion a spiritual Service. From whence it follows, that the Body of Christian Services, is wholly made up of natural Religion, or such Duties wherein we can glorify God, and represent our own Wants: Such are Prayer and Thanksgiving, Acts of Love, Fear, Faith, Hope, the Love of God and our Neighbour; which are those Things by which we can either do Good, or receive any. And, excepting the Sacraments, whose

Effect is spiritual, the Sense mysterious, the Rites easy, and the Number smallest of all; there is not in the whole Body of the Christian Law, any external Rite or Ceremony

prescribed.

And as it intends an entire Abolition of the Mosaic Ceremonies, so it will not admit of a Body of new and superinduced Ceremonies. The Ceremonies of the Christian Worship, must be only the Circumstances, not Parts of the Religion, as they were in the Jewish Dispensation. If we are enjoined by our Superiors to pray kneeling, we must kneel in Obedience to the Law: And yet, at our private Devotions, we may either fall on our Faces, or pray standing.

But tho' the spirituality of the Gospel excludes all Ceremonies, all bodily Rites from being of the Substance of Religion; yet it does not prohibit the Ministry and Service of the Body: For to worship God with our Bodies, is a reasonable, and therefore a spiritual Service. Thus when the Eyes are lift up in Prayer, when the Bowels yearn with Pity, when the Hands are extended to succour the needy and distressed; the Body then serves the Spirit, the Spirit serves its God, and all is a spiritual Religious.

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But because a bodily Religion, such as the Jewish was, cannot be a spiritual Religi-

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the Service of the Body is also part of the Ministry of the Spirit: The Rule, which may determine our Consciences in the Instances of this Article, is This. What so ever is an elicite or imperate Act of Virtue, whether it be performed by the Soul or the Body, is an Act of spiritual Religion; which implies, that those only are properly Acts of spiritual Religion, which are the Productions of an holy Mind, or the proper and immediate Instruments of some Virtue.

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The imperate Acts, or outward Expressions of the Virtue of one Commandment, must not contradict the elicite Acts of another.

By imperate Acts, is here meant all those Actions which are commanded to be done for the Interest of any Virtue; but which are not proper to the Virtue, but may only minister to it, or signify it. To reject the impure Solicitations of the Unchast, is an elicite Act of the Virtue of Chastity: But to lie on the Ground, to wear an hair Shirt, to roll the naked Body upon Thorns, are only imperate Acts, such as may be chosen Y 2

for the Interest of the Virtue, without being necessary to any Man. The Terms being thus explained, the following Remarks are the Measures of the Rule.

1. The elicite Acts of Several Virtues can never be contrary to each other. Thus an Act of Religion is never against an Act of Charity. Charity is never inconfistent with Justice, nor is Temperance ever contrary to Piety. Indeed, it may fo happen, that the outward Actions of feveral Virtues may not be confiftent; as fometimes I may not be able at once to feed my Child, and the Poor that begs; or, at another time, to tell the Truth, and yet preserve the Life of my innocent Brother: But tho' the external Act cannot at all Times be exerted, and therefore must be omitted in some Cases, yet it can never be lawful, for the Interest of one Virtue, to act against another. Nor can it be faid, that in the Cases just mentioned, in performing one Virtue, we act against the other; for here we only do that which we are most obliged to do, and would perform the other, were it in our Power. But, 2. The imperate Acts of one Virtue, may contradict the instrumental or imperate Acts of another. Thus Fasting, when it is commanded by Religion, may be prejudicial in the Opinion of our Physician, whom to obey, is fometimes a Precept of Prudence, and fometimes

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fometimes of Charity. What we are chiefly to regard in this Cafe, is This: That fince all the imperate Acts of Virtue derive their Worth only from their Relation to Virtue; that imperate Act, which ministers to the Virtue then to be preferred, is to be preferred likewise. But in these Cases, Prudence, and the Conduct of a good Guide, is the best Security to him, who enquires with an honest and pure Heart. 3. Those Actions, which only collaterally and indirectly ferve the Interest of any Virtue, must give way, if they would otherwise obstruct the proper Acts of any Virtue whatloever. Thus Fasting must not then be used, when to Fast, would be inconfistent with Charity: For Charity is directly commanded, and for it felf only; whereas, Fasting is made a Precept not for its own fake, but with a view to something else. 4. Tho' the Terms of Art here used, are not common, yet the Practice of these Rules in the Questions of Conscience will not be very difficult, if we will but, with some Application, observe the difference of outward Actions, and endeavour to discover, which are the elicite or proper, and which the imperate or instrumental Acts of Virtue. For these latter being in their own Nature sometimes obliged to give way to other Actions; but the former Actions always taking place, unless they pounded

find an invincible Obstacle from without;
Our Duty will be easy when we once know
the Nature of the outward Action.

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When any Thing is forbidden by the Laws of Christ, all those Things also, by which we come to that Sin, are understood to be forbidden by the same Law.

which only collarerally and induce In this Case, there is one great difference between positive and negative Laws. For when any thing is commanded or enjoined, our Duty does not oblige us to make use of this or that particular Instrument in order to our Obedience, but the Choice is left wholly to our own Prudence: For it is all one as to the Law, by what Instrument our Obedience be effected, so it only be a good one. But in negative Precepts, the Case is different. For we are not only to abltain from the Crime, but from every Instrument of it, every Path that may lead to it, or whatfoever can introduce and promote it. For all thefe Things bear some Relation to the Sin; and therefore, tho' every thing which is, or may be good, is not commanded, yet every thing that is evil, is forbidden. This we are plainly raught by our Saviour's Sermen in the Mount, wherein when he expounded

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frictly guarded the Purity of the Intention, as the external Action. And in this the Law of our bleffed Master, is much more perfect than the Digest of Moses. For the there also God forbad Concupiscence, yet it was instanced only in the Matter of Covetousness.

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He who thinks a lustful Thought, bath transgressed a Commandment: And if the Eye be adulterous, the Mouth impure, or the Hand unclean; the whole Man is polluted before God, and stands guilty of the breach of the main Law. The Rule therefore principally intends, that even the least Addresses and Preparations to forbidden Actions, are likewise forbidden. Thus, we are not only to abstain from Fornication; but even from those things which may probably become Temptations to it, as wanton Gestures, loose Dresses, cating high, and drinking deep, and all the other Arts of Plealure and Provocation. For every Temptation is a Sin, when it is procured by our own Act and Defign; and unless the Man be furprized, he never chuses the Instrument of Sin, only as an Instrument; but merely for the Relation it bears to the Sin.

yet please themselves with the Contemplati-

on of it, and would act it, if they durst: And there are others, who are not afraid, but only unwilling to act it, because they would not lose the Pleasure of the Temptation, which lasts longer than the Pleasure of the Sin. There can be no other Reason assigned for this, but an immense Love of Sin, and so perfect an Adhesion to the Pleasures of it, that these Men will deny themselves even in that they most love, rather than at all interrupt their Relish for the possessing it.

But the these Men only tempt themselves, or handle the Instruments of Sin; the the Temptation does not carry them on to the Sin; yet, by this subtilty in sinning, they may be said to be the greatest Transgressors

of the Laws of Christ.

#### RULE VIII.

The suppositive Propositions with the supervening Advices of our blessed Saviour, are always equivalent to Matter of Duty, and are, by Interpretation, a Commandment.

This Rule is principally intended as an Explication of the Precepts of Prayer, Alms, and Fasting; all which our Saviour, in his Sermon upon the Mount, expressed by way of supposition. This way of Expression, tho

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tho' it be not a positive and legal Expression of a Commandment, yet it supposes either a preceding Law, a constant Practice, or that They, to whom the words were directed, understood them to be real Intimations of the divine Pleafure. When ye give Alms do not blow a Trumpet, faid our Saviour, when ye pray, stand not in the corners of the Streets: When you fast, do not disfigure your Faces. As to the Duties of Prayer and Almsgiving, there is no difficulty; our Lord and his Apostles having given us feveral express Commands relating to them. But as to Fasting, fince he hath only given us these suppositive words, with a Prophecy, that his Disciples should fast in the Days of the Bridegroom's absence, and a Declaration of the happy Effects of Fasting; there is more difficulty in coming to know, whether these words have the Force of a Commandment.

I shall not here enumerate the Examples of Fasting recorded in the Old Testament, nor observe how necessary a part of Religion the Jews thought it. But it is certain, that our Saviour approved it, that he allowed a Time to it, even a Portion of that Time in which God will be served. And in that most excellent Body of Laws, his Sermon on the Mount, he recommends Fasting to us in the same manner, and with the same Force,

as he proposed the other Duties of Prayer and Almsgiving. But to put this Matter past all doubt, it is certain, that the Disciples of our Lord understood it to be a Duty. St. Paul

Cor. zi. was in Fastings often; and this seemed one Characteristick of the Ministers of the Go-

the Ministers of God in much Patience, in Watchings, in Fastings. And when Paul and Barnabas were constituted Apostles of the Uncircumcision, they fasted, and prayed, and laid their Hands on them, and sent them away. And this Duty was thought so

for vii facred, that St. Paul permitted married Perfons to fet apart some Time, from their ordinary Endearments, that they might give

themselves to Fasting and Prayer.

Besides, Fasting is an Act that may contribute to many Virtues. It is an elicite and proper Act of Temperance, Repentance, Humiliation, and of the Martification of the Flesh, with its Affections and Luss: And it is an imperate or instrumental Act, as it ministers to Prayer. Now That which serves God, and ministers to Religion so effectually, which produces so many Graces, was practised by the Faithful in both Testaments, was part of the Religion of both Jews and Gentiles, an Instance of natural Religion, and an Impetration of God's Mercy and Compassion: That which Christ recommended,

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to which he has annexed Promifes, and afford the World that his heavenly Father will reward it that certainly can be no less than a Duty of the Evangelical, or Christian Religion.

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The Institution of a Rite or Sacrament by our blessed Saviour, is a direct Law, and passes a proper Obligation in its whole Integrity.

every Man be now in Confequence of the This Rule relates but to one Instance, that of the Sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood. For the' Christ did appoint two Sacraments; yet that of Baptilm was infliented in the Form of an express Commandment: But the other Sacrament, only by certain Intimations of Duty, by relative Precepts, and the Supposition of certain Actions. As, quoties feceritis, as oft as ye hall do it, and the like. Now whether this doth amount to a Commandment, is the Enquiry. And the' the Question relating to half Communion, may be otherwise determined; yet it cannot be cleared up by any Instrument so certain and immediate as to do the thing at all: ver, in every (.zidt

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ence in this Instance; I observe that the In-

stitution of a Thing by God and by Christ, is to be distinguished from the Manner of the Thing fo appointed. When God appointed Marriage, he did not, by that Inflitution, lay every fingle Person under an Obligation to marry: For some were Eunuchs from their Mother's Womb, some were made fuch by Men, and others made themselves. fuch for the Kingdom of Heaven. But then, if we consider the Manner of the Thing thus instituted, we shall find it a perfect, unalterable, univerfal Commandment. For tho' every Man be not, in Confequence of the Institution, obliged to marry; yet if he does marry, he is by the Institution, so far obliged, that he is not, upon any score, to transgress the Measures and Bounds of it. He must have but one Wife at a time; he must use her with Kindness and Honour, and within the Limits of Nature and Sobriety; and fo in other Things to which he is bound by the Institution, as animal resident

And the Reason is this; a divine Institution, is the proper Cause, Warrant, and Original of this State or Action: And therefore whatever is not in the Institution, is not derived from God, but from our felves. So that, tho it does not oblige us in all Cases, to do the thing at all; yet, in every Cafe, when we do it, we are obliged to do it, as we are appointed to ! contain the sons titution.

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Now the Case is just the same, with regard to the Sacrament, as it was observed to be in the Institution of Marriage. For the word Institution, not directly fignifying a Law, but rather, the prescribing the Manner and Measures of Obedience to those who are already obliged; all Men are not thereby obliged always to receive the Sacrament: For it being instituted only for certain Ends, and there being required in the Receivers some certain previous Dispositions; the Obligation to receive it can be only relative, and limited But to them indeed, who do receive it, the Institution is a perfect, indispensable Commandment, for observing all those Things, which were intended in the Infittution? only make one Cnoitutiful

From whence we may safely argue, that since every part of Christ's Institution of the Sacrament, is for ever obligatory to all who receive it, and the taking it in both kinds, is part of his Institution: Therefore, all whoever communicate, are to receive it in both kinds. Hence we may plainly see the Absurdity of pretending a Tradition from Christ by the Hands of his Apostles, and the Ministry of the Church; when even in the essential Parts of that holy Supper, we celebrate it in such a manner, as Christ and his Apostles never did.

does not; by Concomitance, include the Blood,

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Our Saviour, in this facred institution. gave his Apostles an express order, drink ye all of This Now if Christ instituted this Sacrament for the whole Church, and the Apostles were the Representatives of the whole Body of Christ; then the whole Church, when they communicate, are obliged by the Commandment to receive the Cup. But if they did not represent the whole Church, where thall we find a fufficient Authority to prove, that the People are to receive at all? For if they received only in the Capacity of Priefts, then the Inflication reaches no further; and it would be as much Sacrilege for the People to ear and drink the Symbols, as to confecrate Them.

I shall here only make one farther Reslection, upon that artful and delusive Pretence, upon which, the Laity in the Romish
Communion, are not uneasy in being deprived of the Cup in the Eucharist. They
are told, that under each kind, whole Christ
may be received: That he who receives the
Body, receives also the Blood; because, by
Concomitance, the Blood is received in the
Body. Now, that this cannot be true, is
evident; because the Eucharist, being the Sacrament of the Lord's Death, of his Body
broken, and his Blood poured out; the receiving the Sacrament of the Body only,

does not, by Concomitance, include the Blood,

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fince the Body is here facramentally reprefented, as flain, and separate from Blood. And this is fo notorious, that fome superstitious Persons, A. D. 490. refused the Chalice, because (said they) the Body of Christ, represented in the Eucharist, is without Blood: Whereas the Romanists refuse the Cup, upon pretence, that the Body is not without Blood. But they were both in the wrong: For it is certain, that the Body is represented facramentally as killed, and fo, without Blood, which had flowed out at the Wounds: and therefore the Pretence of Concomitance. is wholly idle and impertinent. But tho' the Body is represented without Blood in his Death; yer, because the pouring out of his Blood is likewife to be facramentally reprefented, they ought not therefore to have omitted the Cup.

In short, if it be true, that the Blood is in the Body by Concomitance, as it is called, and that therefore they who receive the Body, receive also the Blood; it seems a necessary Consequence, that they who sacrifice the Body, do likewise facrifice the Blood; and then, it will be no more necessary to celebrate, than it is to communicate in both

nor impossible. For in a Matter of Choice

is the funer way, and is neither inconvenions,

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#### force the Body is here facramentally repretented, as flain, Xuaduy Auc from Blood.

If the Sense of a Law be dubious, we are sometimes to expound it by Liberty, sometimes by Restraint.

Tho' the Sense and Intent of the Laws of Jesus Christ are so visible, that all good Men, guided by the Spirit of God, and applying to proper means, may generally discern the main Intention and Design of God; yet the meaning of some Laws is so embarrassed by the difference of Mens Understandings, the various Circumstances of Actions, and other accidental Disorders, that a Cloud is thrown upon the Light of God's Word, and a Vail upon the Guide of our Lives. Now when any uncertainty of this kind occurs, the first sense of the words is to be either enlarged, or restrained, according to the following Measures.

In what Cases the stricter Sense of Christ's

Laws is to be followed?

is under Consideration, and is to be done; we are rather to take the severer Sense of the Law. And the Reason is, because that is the surer way, and is neither inconvenient, nor impossible. For in a Matter of Choice, and on which we may deliberate, the safest

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way is to determine for God, and the Intereft of Religion. Thus, we are commanded to judge our selves, that we be not judged of the Lord. Now in the Enquiry, which a Penitent Man may make, as to the Nature and Extent of this Duty; if the Question be, whether judging our selves, only means condemning our felves for our Sins, and owning our selves justly obnoxious to God's Displeafure; or whether it intends that we should put in Execution our own Sentence against our Sins, and chaftife our felves with fome corporal Punishments: If the Man can be no otherwise determined, he certainly acts fafely in chufing the fecurer fide. For here is the less danger of omitting any thing he ought to do: He does all that he imagines is required; and thereby certainly shews the utmost Caution and Regard, both to God and himself. But this is not only the fafer Method of acting, but the fecurer Sense of the Law is of it felf most reasonable to be chosen, as it is the very View and Intent of the Lawgiver, who puts no politive Bounds to his own Laws of Love and Duty. 2. In interpreting the Laws of Christ, the strict Sense is to be followed, when the Laws relate to God and to Religion, and contain in them direct Matter of Piety to him, or Charity to our Neighbour. For the farther we proceed in Actions of this kind, the nearer Z Approaches

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Approaches we make to our God; and are therefore never to be stopped till we arrive at our Journey's end. To this effect are those words of the Son of Sirach; When you glorify the Lord, exalt him as much as you can; for even yet will be far exceed: And when you exalt him, put forth all your strength, and be not weary; for you can never go far enough. Who hath seen him, that he might tell us, and who can magnify him as he is? There are hid greater things yet than these be; for we have seen but a few of his Works.

When the Laws of Christ are to be interpreted to a Sense of Ease and Liberty.

We are in no Case to omit any necessary Part of Duty, nor indulge the omission of it, to the Weakness or Infirmity of any Man. For our Weakness can never be the Measure of the Necessity of the Law. That Infirmity by which we omit any necessary part of Duty, is therefore a state of Sin. God, who well knew all our Imperfections, and the Difficulties of our Obedience, complied with them fufficiently in the Sanction of the Law, and laid on us no heavier a Burthen, than it was in our Power to Support. So that no Sin, no Omission of any necessary Duty is to be allowed of; no Law of Christ is to be explained fo as to comply with our Weaknels, in opposition to the Command of God.

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But, on the other hand, when a less fevere Sense is within the Limits of the Duty, it has been thought very charitable and necessary, that our Weaknesses ought to be complied with. Thus, if it should be enquired, whether our Sorrow for our Sins ought to be piercing, fharp, and fenfible, like the Perception of any great temporal Evil, or that which a Mother feels at the Death of an only Child; this being a Question of Degrees, there is no necessity of answering in the affirmative. For any Degree which is confistent with the main Duty, may be permitted to him, whose Infirmity requires such Indulgence. For, were a weak and a diffident Man to be told, that the highest Degree of Sorrow is indispensably necessary, and that the Commandment is to be taken in the feverest Sense; an exact Conformity would appear to him impossible; and he might desperately resolve to omit it all, since he is told he cannot be fafe, if he omits any God, who demands nothing if

There is another Case in which the Law may be explained to a Sense of Ease and Liberty; I mean, in Questions relating to some external Acts of Religion. Thus it is in regard to the Injunction of Fasts, or other outward Acts of Mortification, which are indeed naturally deduced from the Laws of Christ; but still the Measures of these Laws

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are to be confistent with the great Design of the Law, which is Mercy and Internal Religion.

Who are truly and innocently weak, and

to be complied with?

1. They are to be complied with, who are but Novices in Religion, or the uninstructed: Whose Weakness is derived, not from the Force of any habitual Sin, but only from the want of Knowledge. For none can more innocently or more justly pretend to Tenderness and Forbearance, than those, who with respect to Religion, are yet to be fupposed weak as Infants. 2. They likewise are to be complied with, who are unwilling to make any abatements to themselves, but fincerely and diligently profecute their Duty. For this Diligence and Sincerity is a fufficient Proof that their Weakness has been wholly innocent, and unavoidable. 3. Infirmity of Body is another Reason for explaining certain Laws in a fense favourable to the infirm. For God, who demands nothing that is impossible to be done, is satisfied if the Obedience of the Spirit be fecured, and the Body obeys the Laws only as well as it can.

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The positive Laws of Jesus Christ, cannot be dispensed with by any humane Power.

I have before shewn, that the natural Laws, from which the Evangelical are chiefly taken, are indispensable. But Christ hath introduced some Laws whose Reason is not natural and eternal; and which therefore have given occasion to the Question, whether or no they are dispensable by an human Power, As to this Enquiry; I am of Opinion, that, fince Christ is the King of Heaven and Earth, that he is the Head of the Catholick Church, and therefore hath Supreme Power; fince he is the wonderful Counsellor, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace; fince his Wildom must be Supreme, in as much as he is the Wisdom of the Father; he hath made his Laws fo wifely, and fo adapted them to the Powers and Circumstances of Men, that they may be observed by all Men, and in all the Ways, wherein he hath made them absolutely obliging: Now, because every Dispensation of Laws supposes an Infirmity or Imperfection either in the Law, or in the Man; either, that the Law was attended with some inconveniences unforeseen and unavoidable,

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frances happen to the Man, as does not fall under the Cognizance of the Law: It therefore follows, that in the Laws of the holy Jesus there is no Dispensation. For certainly, there can be no Insirmity or Impersection in his Law, for the Reasons above mentioned: Nor ought we to suppose any Incapacity in the Man; for it may be in the Power of every Man, always to do all that Christ commands, or exacts of him; that is, he is under no natural Incapacity of doing

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any Act, which Christ hath required.

Indeed, with regard to some external Instances of a Commandment, it may be accidentally impossible to obey. Thus, for want of Water, we may not be able to baptize a Child; or, for want of Bread and Wine, cannot possibly celebrate the holy Eucharist. But it does not therefore follow, that there is a Power of dispensing in these things, lodged in any Man or Society of Men: For, in fuch Cases, the Obligation of the Law it self ceases; and therefore a Dispensation in it is wholly needless. God cannot be unjust; and therefore we need not beg his Pardon for leaving a thing undone, which we would, but cannot do; por are we therefore, to suppose a Power of dispensing necessary to the Church, or to he intrusted to the Conduct of Men in any Cales,

Cases, where we cannot suppose, that the Laws of God do bind.

However, as to the Power of dispensing, feveral of the Romish Writers, have afferted that the Pope is invested with it, in relation to all the Laws of God, excepting only the Articles of Faith: But the more modest of them, have confined him to the exercise of it only in fuch Cases, where the Observation of a Law, shall be an Obstruction to a greater spiritual Good; as it may happen, particularly, in the matter of Oaths and Vows. We shall be able to see whether they are in the Right, by making some Reslections upon an Instance of great Moment among them. A Man folemnly vows to marry a Woman, and contracts himself to her, per Verba de prasenti. The Woman hereupon, confiders him as her Husband, and loves him passionately. He changes his Mind and defigns to enter into a Monastery; but first would fain know, who can warrant him in the Breach of his Faith and Vows. The Pope answers, he can: And tho', by the Law of God, he be tied to that Woman, yet, because the keeping his Vows, would hinder him from doing God better Service in Religion; there is sufficient Reason for difpenfing with his Vow.

But this is directly against the Apostle's Rule, and is doing Evil that Good may come.

come. But belides, who can affure me that fuch an Act of Religion is better than an Act of Justice? Or that God will be ferved by my doing my Wife the greatest Injury? Or that by our Engagements to our Wives, we are not as much obliged to God as by monastick Vows before the Abbot? Or that Marriage is not as high an Act of Religion, if prudently and piously undertaken, as the taking the Habit of St. Francis? Or that I may not as well fleal from a Man, in order to be able to give Alms, as wrong my Wife, in order to give my felf to a Cloyfter? Or that I can ever fafely give my felf to Religion by first breaking thro' the Religion of Vows and Promifes, of Justice and Honour? Or that the doing the Duties of a monastick Life, will clear me from the Guilt of having made my Wife miserable, and all her future Life desperate and calamitous? Am I fure, or does it appear probable to me, that God will hear the Prayers 1 offer to him in a Cloyster, when possibly at the same time my injured Wife is praying to God to do her Justice, and avenge my Perjury upon my guilty Head? How therefore can I certainly know whether fuch a Religion is a greater Good, and as fuch ought to be preferred to the keeping a Marriage Vow: For I take Marriage or a fingle Life to be in themselves indifferent as to Piety or Impiety. They may

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No Man affumes to himfelf a Power of dispensing in the Law of God, but the Pope only; and he does it only in consequence of those Words spoken to St. Peter, What so. Matt. xvi. ever thou shalt loofe in Earth shall be loofed 19. in Heaven. But did ever any of the Apoftles, or apostolick Men imagine, that St. Peter could dispense with the Violation of a lawful Oath? Did not all that Power then promifed to him relate only to fraternal Correption? And was it not equally given to the other Apostles? For either it was never perform'd to St. Peter, or else it was in like manner promised and made good to the other Apostles, in the Donation of the Spirit, of the Power of binding, and the Matth. Words of Christ to them before and after his xviii. 18. Refurrection. From whence it feems necessa- John xx. rily to follow, either that all the Succeffors of the Apostles have had the same Power: or elfe, that the Succeffors of St. Peter never had it.

But however this be, if by those Words, What soever thou shalt loose, the Pope claims an Authority of loosing or untying the Bond of Oaths and Vows, he may as justly claim from them such a Power over Men's Lives, their Rights, their most solemn Engagements,

gagements, as we cannot without Impiety believe, that God would invest any Man with.

There is besides This another Consequence, which arises from the Reflections I first made upon this Rule, viz. that, as there is no Necessity that there should be any Dispenfation in the Laws of Christ, so, in those Cases wherein there may be an improper Difpensation, that is, a Declaration that the Law does not in this Case oblige at all; no Man must presume to appoint any Expedient which the Law permits not; or affert, that a Part of the Law only may be used, when by the Institution the whole was made necessary. For instance; under the want of proper Materials to celebrate the holy Eucharist, it might certainly be declared, that the Precept of Confecrating does not oblige, because no good Law can oblige as to Impossibilities: but then no Man may of his own Head propose an Expedient, and say, tho' there be no Wine wherewith to celebrate, yet you may do it in Ale or Water: nor can any Man warrant an imperfect Confecration, or allow the Priest to celebrate with Bread only. And the reason is plain; because all Sacramental Institutions and positive Laws arise not from the nature of the Things themfelves, but depend wholly upon the Will of the

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the Lawgiver; and the Will of the Lawgiver being actually thus specified, in this Manner, this Matter, this Institution; whatsoever is superadded to this, is no part of the Legislator's Will, and therefore can have no

Warrant or Authority.

And thus it is with regard to all positive Precepts, wherein the Will of the Lawgiver is the only Reason of them: And therefore the Manner of our performing them is never to be determined by our own reasoning upon them, but by complying with the Will of God, which is all the Reason we are here to enquire after. Indeed in natural Laws, and Obligations derived from reasoning upon the Natures of Things, we must do what we can; and if we cannot do all that was at first intended, yet it is still the Design of God, that we do as much as we can. For there is a natural Reason to be given for a natural Duty; and by this natural Reason, if we cannot come up to the whole Duty, we are still obliged to all the Parts of it, which are naturally good. and before Burnslang gold the

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Not every thing that is in the Sermons and Doctrine of Jesus Christ, was intended to bind as a Law or Commandment.

That we are to love God with all our Hearts, is the first and most important Duty; and there is a certain Point to which it must be carried, or we perform not the Duty at all. Thus, we are so to love God, that we love nothing in opposition to him, that we love nothing more than him, that we love nothing equal to him: In thort, that our manner of loving him be fuch, as will engage us to fet a due Value upon his Love, and comply with the Duty he demands from us. Thus far the Law obliges every Man. This may be called the legal Sense of Duty, to which we are obliged fully to conform, or we cannot be innocent. But there is another, which may be called a latitude of Duty, or a carrying the Duty of the Commandment still higher. But this is not a Confequence of the Obligation of the Law, but only of the Strength and Ardour of the Man's Love; which indeed God encourages as far as it can go, but commands no farther than to the strict observation of the Duty.

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The different Degrees of Perfection in Men, whom Christ will bless in another World, are a sufficient Proof, that every thing in the Sermons of our Saviour, was not intended to bind as a Law. He who observes all the Evangelical Exhortations, does not indeed do more than his Duty, but only does it better: And he who does it in a less perfect manner, shall indeed receive a less Reward, but shall not perish, if he obeys the just and strict Measures of the Law.

No Man however, in keeping the Law of Christ, must set Limits to a Duty by saying, hither well I come, and no further. For Evangelical Counsels are thus far necessary and obliging; that altho' in them, that is, in the Degrees of Duty, there are no determinate Measures prescribed; yet we are obliged, each Man in his proportion, from the beginning of each Duty, to endeavour

to carry it on to Perfection.

But the Rule holds, as well in some great Instances of Duty, as in the Degrees of it. Thus, where those are mentioned, who made themselves Eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven, or who sold all they had, and gave it to the Poor; the Duties and Laws here designed, are Chastity, Benevolence, Contempt of the World, and Zeal for the Propagation of the Gospel. The Virtues themselves

felves are Duries to which we are obliged by Laws: But that we are to be charitable, to the Degree of giving all away, or chaft, by a perpetual Coelibacy, are not Laws.

Here it may not be improper to observe some of the Marks of difference between Evangelical Laws, and Evangelical Counfels. 1. Where there is not a negative either expressed, or implied, there it cannot be a Law, but is only an Evangelical Counsel. For in every Law, there is a Degree of Duty fo necessary, that to fall short of it, is necessarily an Act or State of Sin: And therefore, if the Law be Affirmative, the Negative must be included, and is properly the Sanction of the main Duty. Honour thy Father and thy Mother, is a Law; because the lowest step of the Duty here enjoined, is laid upon us, by this Negative, Thou Shalt not curse thy Father or Mother. But in the Evangelical Counfels there is nothing but what is affirmative. There are some who make themselves Eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven. This points out to us a religious Act or State; but all that is Negative in the Sanction of it, is this; He that hath Ears to hear, let him hear; he that can receive it, let him receive it; or, he that bath Power over his Will, and hath so decreed in his Heart, doth well. With regard to Laws or Commandments, he who does the

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the Duty, does well; but he who doth not the Duty, doth ill: But in respect to Counfels, it hath been faid, he who does not, may do well; but he who does, hath done better: As St. Paul says upon the Question I Cor. vii. of Marriage. 2. When an Act, or State is propounded to us only upon the account of Reward, without any Penalty annexed; it is then a Counfel only, and not a Law. The divine Laws are derived from the divine Power and Wisdom, and, as such, Fear, which is faid to be the Beginning of our Wisdom, is the Sanction of them. Therefore, we may conclude, That to be no divine Law, to the Transgression of which, there is annexed no Penalty to work upon our Fear. 3. In Counsels, sometimes the contrary is evil; because he who acts in opposition to the Defign of an Evangelical Counfel, is an Enemy to the Grace and Virtue of it : But in Laws, not only the contrary, but the privative also is very criminal. For not only he who oppresses the Poor, is guilty of a breach of Charity, but he also who does not relieve them. I morganis mi noll to and A ods

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#### RULE XIII.

Some things may be used in the Service of God, which are not commanded in any Law, nor explicitly commended in any Dostrine of Jesus Christ.

This Rule is principally defigned to regulate the Consciences of those scrupulous and superstitious People, who imagine they cannot justify any Action of their Lives, or, more particularly, any Action in the Service of God, unless it be expressly warranted by Scripture. We shall therefore here inquire, 1. Whether we are to require from Scripture a warrant for every Action in common Life? And, 2. Whether we may not do any thing in Religion, which the Scripture does not expressly oblige us to?

As to the first Enquiry, there are no Difficulties in it but such as are raised by Ignorance, Jealousy, or Superstition. The Laws of Jesus Christ were intended to regulate the Actions of Men, in the great Lines of Religion, Justice, and Sobriety. But whether a Man shall speak French or English, whether a Person ought to be baptized in the Water of the Spring, or the Water of the Pool; whether a Man shall marry or abstain; live upon Flesh, or the Fruits of the Earth;

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Earth; or whether he should profess Law or Physick: How can the holy Scriptures bel supposed to prescribe Rules in these Affairs. or in any other equally indifferent?

If we were to do nothing but what the Scripture either commands or approves; it might, with a less Hyperbole than that St. John used, be said, that the World would not contain the Books that should be written. But fince all the Actions to which the Scriptures oblige us, are contained in thefe few Rules; that we are bound to follow that which is Good; that we are to decline that which is forbidden; to love and pursue that which is laudable: We have nothing more to do, than to form those Actions. which have any relation to them, by thefe Rules. But if there are some Actions which do not fall under those Measures, and yet cannot be omitted; it were abfurd to become useless to our selves and to Mankind, because we imagine we want a Warrant to justify those Actions, which no Lawgiver has ever made unlawfule w themselve Turned and all

There is, however, fomething more difficult in the other Enquiry, whether in matters of Religion, we have the same Liberty as in matters of common Life? Or, whether we may chuse something to worship God withal, of which he hath neither given stribute for Boss Acc, the Trad tions, the

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us a Command, nor the least Intimation of his Pleasure 32 whole and into wolf sabilities

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In answer to this Enquiry, let it be obferved, that to worthip God, is an Act of Duty and Obedience, and therefore supposes a Commandment: And our Choice is no farther concerned in it, than that we must chise to obey. Of this God plainly forewarhed his People, when he gave them a Law, and commanded them to observe it entirely, without Addition or Diminution. Deut. xii. What foever I command you, observe to do it; thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminift from it. And again ; Te Shall not do after all the Things that we do here this Day, every Man what sever is right in bis own Eyer. So that in the Old Teflament, there is an express Prohibition of any

> there was unlawful, which God had not those Actions, which upstalos bas uslock

In the New Testament, we are still under the lame express Prohibition; and et 200 enonea, or Will-worthip, is a word which generally founds ill among Christians, as meaning the fame thing which God forbad in Deuteronomy, the doing that which feemeth Good in their rown Eyes, or as our Saviour lays more fully, teaching for Doctrines, the Traditions, the Injunctions,

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Injunctions, the Commandments of Men. He who fays, that an Action which God hath not commanded, is of it felf necessary; or that God is rightly worshipped by an Act, of which he hath no way expressed his Pleasure, is guilty of Superstition and Willworship. For thus far we are certain, that nothing is necessary, which is not commanded by God; that nothing is pleasing to God in Religion, which is wholly of humane Invention; and that the mere Commands of Men, are no direct parts of Religion, no Rules nor Measures of Conscience.

But since there are many Actions, by which God harh been served and pleased, tho' they were never commanded, and which therefore may be justly called Instances of Will-worship too; we are carefully to distinguish them from those Acts of Will-worship which are confessedly criminal, and not call every thing Supersitious, that is, in any sense, an Instance of Will-worship. For it is very possible, that the same word shall sometimes signify that which is laudable, and sometimes that which is criminal and blameworthy.

We shall therefore endeavour to shew, what voluntary or uncommanded Actions, are lawful and commendable.

1. Those things, which Men do, or order to be done by a probable Interpretation of A a 2 what what is doubtful or ambiguous, are not Willworship in the culpable sense. God commanded the Jews to rest, or keep a Sabbath on the seventh Day. How far this Rest was to be extended, was not to be taught by the Law, but by the Interpretation of it. And therefore when the Jewish Doctors had rationally and authoritatively affigned the extent of a Sabbath Day's Journey, they who resolved strictly to observe a Measure which God gave not, were not to be blamed; for what they did, feemed to be, in fome fort, the Consequence of a Commandment.

2. What soever is done with a wife Defign, in things relating to Piety and Charity, is not Will-worship, or Superstition. Thus, fince we are commanded to worship God with our Body; if we bow the Head, if we proftrate our felves on the Ground, or fall flat on our Faces, if we labour in the Service of God even to the lofs of our Strength, or give our Bodies to be burnt; tho' we are not commanded to do these things, yet we are not superstitious if we do them; because these voluntary Actions of our own, are but the Circumstances or Inftances of fomething which is not voluntary, but imposed upon us by God.

3. What soever is really instrumental to any Act of Virtue or Grace, tho' it be no where expressed in the Law of God, is not Will-

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-INC and a morship, in the guilty sense. Thus, we do not find that David had a Command from God to build a Temple to him: And yet Nathan assured him, that he did well, because it was in his Heart to build it. It was therefore pleasing to God, because it ministred to that Duty and Religion, about which he had signified his Pleasure. So, to fast, is an Instrument of Religion; and to appoint particular Days of Fasting, is an Instrument of Religion and the Worship of God, not indeed directly, but as it is evidently subservient to both.

The Circumstance of a religious Action, may be admitted or imposed civilly, without being superstitious. As to worship God, is a Duty, which cannot be a superstitious Will-worship; so to adore him by bowing the Head or Knee towards the East or West, is a Circumstance of the pious Adoration we owe him. Now this Circumstance can never be Superstitious; but as it may be enjoined by Laws, it becomes, in a sense, religious. This Act of Adoration must be performed some way or other: And if a private Will may, in regard to a Man's self, determine the manner of it; then certainly a publick Law may innocently do it.

But that what is in it felf, innocent or laudable, may be preserved so; it is neces-

mandment,

### Of the Interpretation of

fary that we observe the following Cau-

1. Whatfoever a Man does in an uncommanded Instance, it must be done with a Liberty of Conscience: That is, we must not lay that upon others as a necessary Duty, which we our felves take to be only an Act of Love, or the Inftrument or Circumstance of a Grace or Virtue. 2. This Instrument of Grace or Virrue must be such, as naturally and reasonably contributes to the Exercile of the Virtue, of which it is made an Instrument. It must be such as is commonly used by wife and good Men in the like Cale, and hath a plain and direct Tendency to the Effect for which it is designed. 3. All uncommanded Inflances of Piety are to be expressed by their own proper Qualities; that is, if their Worth be only relative, they are not to be pressed upon Men, as things of an absolute Excellence. Thus the Encratites and Manicheans, besides their being Hereticks, were very superstitious. For tho' they might lawfully have abstained from the ordinary use of Wine, in order to a greater Temperance and Sobriety; yet when they began to fay, that fuch an Abstinence was abiolutely necessary, and all use of Wine abominable, they run directly into Superfiction and a criminal Will-worthip. 4. When any uncommanded Instance relating to a Commandment.

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mandment, is to be performed; it ought to be done temperately, and in proportion to its real Use. For if a stronger Zeal invites us to the Action, we are not to give the Reins to that Zeal, so as to let it pass on as far as it naturally can, but only as far as pioully and prudently it ought. He who gives Alms to the Poor, may, as another Instance of the same Virtue, spare all vain, or less necessary Expence, that he may be able to give the more liberally, and may highly please God with this uncommanded Instance of Duty; but then, he must not pursue it beyond the proportion of his own Affairs, to the Ruin of his Relations, or to the making himself feel, and repine under, the pressures of want.

These Measures being observed, the voluntary and uncommanded Actions of Religion, by the Relation they bear to the Laws of God, and as they are Instances of our Obedience, become very acceptable to God; and by being a voluntary Service, or an Act of Religion proceeding from the Will of Man, that is, from his love of God, and his Desires to please him, will, no doubt, procure him

be admitted, in order to make it a full the politory of the divine Will, is affirmed by

ence, I shall show, a. That the Church of

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of the Interpretation of mandment, is to be performed, it ought to

# be done tempervix and in proportion to

The Christian Law, both of Faith and Manners, is fully contained in the holy Scriptures; and from thence only can the Conscience have divine Warrant and Authority.

I have already given some account of the Persection and Fullness of Chriss Law; but where this Law is recorded, and that the sacred Scriptures are the persect and only digest of it, is the design of this Rule to shew. This is of great Importance to the Rule of Conscience; because, if we know not where to find our Rule, or if there can be several Tables of this Law, pretended, our Obedience must spring from Chance, or, which is as bad, our own uncertain choice.

That the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament contain the whole Will and Law of God, is afferted by the primitive Fathers, and by all the reformed Churches. That the Scriptures are not a compleat Rule of Faith and Manners, but that Tradition is to be admitted, in order to make it a full Repository of the divine Will, is affirmed by the Church of Rome. For the clearing up, and establishing this great Rule of Conscience, I shall shew, I. That the Church of

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God, in the first and best Ages of it, when Tradition might have been more certain, and an Assent to it more reasonable, did nevertheless consider the holy Scriptures as their only Rule of Faith and Manners. 2. I shall shew what use there was of Traditions. And 3. That the arguing from Traditions, after the fixing the Canon of Scripture, was not only of very little use in any Point, but false in many, and consequently, unsafe in almost all; and as the World grew older, Traditions grew more uncertain, and the Argument drawn from them, much less forcible.

church did appeal to Scripture in all their Questions, may be made appear by the following Testimonies. \* Clemens Alexandrinus thus expresses himself: It is not fit that we should singly attend to the Affirmations of Men, for our Negative may be as good as their Affirmative. But if the thing be matter of Faith, and not of Opinion only, let us not stay for a Testimony of Men, but prove our Question by the Word of God; which is of all other the most certain, or rather, the only Demonstration. Now that he here means the written word of God, is evident from what he says in the words be-

<sup>\*</sup> Clem. Alex. 7. 'Ou 25 an xãos, &c.

fore, that we are to derive our Certainty

from the Scriptures.

St. Basil, in his \* Ethics, says, What soever is done or said, ought to be proved by the Testimony of the divinely inspired Scripture; both for the full Persuasion of the Good, and also for the Condemnation of the Evil. So likewise † Origen; we ought to bring Scripture for the Proof of our Ex-

position.

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Besides, it is certain, that the primitive Fathers did confute all Herefies from Scripture. To this purpose # Tertullian, Take from Hereticks their Heathen Learning, that they may prove their Questions by Scripture only. Thus | Origen produces the Precedent of our bleffed Lord, confuting, by the Scriptures, the Herefy of the Sadducees concerning the Refurrection; as Christ did, Sic facient, &c. So will the followers of Christ do, by the Examples of Scriptures, which will put to silence every Voice of Pharaoh, that is, every Doctrine of their Adversaries. \*\* St. Chrysoftom, comparing the Scriptures to a Door, fays, for they lead us to God, and open to us the Knowledge of God, and keep Heretics from entring in.

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<sup>\*</sup> Definit. 26. Aci war jina, &c. † In Matth. Tract. 5. Debemus ergo, &c. ‡ De Refor. Carnis, Cap. 3. aufer Hæreticis, &c. | Tract. 23. in Matt. \*\* Homil. 58. in Johan.

Solikewise \*St. Austin; in opposition to treacherous Errors, God thought sit to place our Strength in the Scriptures; which none, who would at all seem a Christian, dares speak against. And from hence, in Fact, did the Fathers conclude against the Gnosticks, the Valentinians, the Marcionites, the Manichees, the Photinians, the Arians, and all the other Pests of the Christian Church.

The Fathers did likewife reject what foever was proposed, as an Article of Faith, or Rule of Manners, that was not contained in, or could not be proved by the Scriptures. They are the words of † Tertullian; if you cannot produce the Authority of a divine or apostolic Precept, your Office is not Religion but Superstition; not a reasonable Service, but only Affectation and a vain Curiofity. And Pamelius supposed these words to make directly against Ecclefiastical Traditions. # His other words against Hermogenes, are still more full and fatisfactory: Whether all things were made of praexistent Matter, I have no where read; let the School of Hermogenes produce the Place where it is written: If it be not written, let him fear the Curse of those, who add to, or detract from what is

<sup>\*</sup> Tract. 2. in Johan. contra infidiofos, &c.

<sup>†</sup> De Orat. Cap. 12. sed quoniam Unum, &c. † Cap. 22.

written in the Scriptures. \* St. Basil is still more decisive in this Point: It is a plain Defection from the Faith, and a Proof of Pride, either to reject any thing of what is written, or to introduce any thing which is not. And in consequence of this important Truth, † he says in another place, what-soever is without Scripture, and not derived from thence, is not of Faith, and therefore is a Sin.

From these, and infinite other Passages which might be produc'd, the plain Consequence is, that they thought nothing to be matter of necessary Duty, either in Faith or Manners, which is not contained in the Scriptures; and with regard to things not contained therein, that we are left to our Liberty, and may consider them only as things indifferent.

But farther; The Fathers of the Church did affirm, the holy Scriptures to be a sufficient and compleat Rule of Faith and Manners So ‡ Irenæus; we know certainly that the Scriptures are perfect, for they are the Word of God, and were spoken by the Spirit of God. So likewise | St. Athanasus; the sacred and divinely inspired Writings, ing,

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<sup>\*</sup> Homil. de Fide. † In Asceticis, Reg. 80.

Lib. 2. Cap. 47. credere hæc talia, &c.

<sup>1</sup> Orat. cont. Gentes, in Initio.

are in themselves sufficient for the preaching, or Enunciation of the Truth. To the fame purpose are St. Chryfostom's words \*; look for no other Teacher; thou hast the Oracles of God: None instructs thee like them: Read the boly Scriptures, fays St. Au-Ain t, in which ye shall fully find, what is to be held, and what to be rejected. And again, & The boly Scripture limits and determines the Rule of our Doctrine. | St. Chrylostom, speaking of the Scripture, tays, if any thing be added to it, or taken from it, it ceases to be a Canon; and consequently the Scriptures are not the Christian Canon. they are not canonical, if they need to be supplied by Traditions. The same thing is affirmed also by Œcumenius, and the very words of St. Chrysoftom are transcribed by Theophylact.

This may be fufficient to prove the Rule, as far as it is to be proved by Matter of Fact, and by the Doctrine of the Church. For if we are to regard Tradition, then, that the Scriptures are a perfect Rule of Faith and Manners, is sufficiently shewn by that very thing, which our Adversaries in this very Question, pay the highest Regard to: But if

<sup>\*</sup> Homil, 9. in F.p. Coloff. † Serm. 38. ad Frattes in Eremo. De Bono Viduit. C. 1, | Homil, 12. in iii. Philip. od ii romes w the sta.

Tradition be not considerable, we are then to be determined by Scripture only. And, in Fact, there is no Tradition so clear, so regular, so undoubted, as that which concerns the Scripture. For if the concurrent Testimony of so many Fathers cannot establish this Article, that the Scripture is the written word of God; then, to argue from Tradition, will, in any Question, be wholly useless: But if it can, as in this Question it certainly ought; then we certainly infer the Truth of this important Rule of Conscience, that the holy Scriptures are the great Rule of Conscience with regard to both Faith and Manners.

2. The next Enquiry is, what Use there may be of Traditions; and if they cannot be a part of the Rule, what Assistance or Supplies do they afford the Conscience in

Points of Faith, or Manners?

To this it may be answered, that Tradition is of great Use for conveying down to us this great Rule of Conscience, the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament: For when it is said that the Scriptures are a persect Rule of Faith and Manners, that they contain all the Word of God, the meaning is, that it is a full and compleat Rule to those who believe them to be the Word of God. For the Question is not whether the Scripture be a Rule, but whether it be a persect Rule;

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Rule; not whether it is the Word of God, but whether it be all the Word of God, that is necessarily to be preached to the Church. So that the Traditions concerning the Scriptures themselves, being extrinsecal to the Scriptures, are likewise extrinsecal to the Question: And supposing that Tradition were the only way of conveying the Scripture to us, vet that Tradition must not, cannot be any part of the Question; because the Scripture must be supposed to have been delivered to us and accepted by us as the Word of God, before we enquire whether this Scripture fo delivered, be all the Word of God or no.

Befides, to enquire of what Use Traditions are, feems to be wholly useless to us, fince there is no Tradition of any Doctrine of Faith, or Rule of Life, but what is contained in Scripture. But if there were, if the Traditions were derived from Christ and his Apostles, they would be of the same use as the Scripture is; at least, if they were as certain, as univerfal, as credible as that is, by which we are affured that the Scripture is the Word of God. If God, by his Son, by his Apostles, or by any other means hath certainly taught his Church, there is no difputing it; let it be made appear that it is a divine Tradition, and then, it is of no moment whether it be written or unwritten. Bur Com the of the self this Tradition,

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der no obligation. In Made the set is red selve

However, it ought to be known, that in the earliest Ages of the Church, the Fathers, in their Disputes with Hereticks, did frequently urge against them the constant and universal Tradition of the Church! But it was for these Reasons: I. Because the Hereticks denied the Scriptures. Thus the Manichees rejected the four Gospels. Ebion admitted St. Matthew's Gospel only; Cerinthus only that of St. Mark; Marcion received only part of St. Luke's; Valentinus only St. John's; Cerdo, Cerinthus, Tatianus, and Manichaus, disowned the Acts of the Apostles. The Ebionites rejected all St. Paul's Epistles. Others would not admit the Epistles of St. James, St. Jude, the fecond of St. Peter, the fecond and third of St. John; as we may see in Eusebius, and St. Ferom. Now in opposition to such Men as these, and till the Canon of Scripture was generally fixed and received, it was very proper to alledge Tradition, especially since the Doctrine of the Scripture was entirely and piously preached in all the Apostolic Churches; and by Doctrines thus generally known and preached, they might well refute the Blasphemies of wicked and heretical Persons: But there is no objection to be raised from this; since all this Tradition, was holy

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holy Scriptures.

2. The Hereticks indeed proposed to themselves great Advantages in having their Caufe tried by Tradition. They hoped that fince there were in feveral Churches feveral Customs, there might also be different Doctrines, or at least they might be plausibly pretended. And therefore the Fathers had fome reason for arguing Tradition, and wresting it from the Hands of those Men who would fain have used it ill. Now there were but two Methods of confuting those Men. One of them, which the Fathers most infifted upon, was, that the Sacred Scriptures were a perfect Rule of Faith and Manners, and that there was no necessity of any Other Tradition; the other was, that the Traditions which they argued from, were false, and directly contrary to the Doctrines which had been always preached by the Church of God. Thus far certainly Tradition might justly and usefully be urged; and the Fathers never pretended to prove by Tradition, what they could not prove by Scripture. The same

3. There is yet another Use of Traditions, but it is in Rituals, and those Instances concerning which St. Paul wrote thus to the Corinthians, The Rest will I set in Order when I come. Such are. 1. the Observation of the Lord's Day. 2. The Government

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of the Church by Bishops, which is conveyed down to us by a Tradition greater than some Books of Scripture, and as great as that for observing the Lord's Day, and fo notorious that it is to be feen in almost all the Monuments of Antiquity. 3. The performing Eccle fiastical Offices by Eccle fiasticat Persons: such as praying in the Church, confecrating the bleffed Eucharift, and the like. Thele three are Universal and Apostolick Traditions; and the they are also really founded on Scripture, yet because the universal Practice and Doctrine of the Churches of God in all Ages, and in all the primitive Churches, is infinitely plain and notorious, less liable to exception, and is the best Comment upon the certain, but less evident Places of Scripture; these therefore may be put under the Protection of universal Tradition: for they really have it beyond all Dif-

From these Instances, it is plain, that we are not to reject Tradition when it is universal; nor suppose, that in any Thing of great Moment the Scripture is desective: for in these Things we are to admit Tradition as the Comment, but are to consider Scripture as the Text. And tho' a Tradition so absolutely universal as these, is of much greater Weight than any Objections that can be raised against it, and were to be admitted without

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the express Authority of Scripture, which all Those have; yet, that even these Things also are contained in Scripture, is a very forcible Argument of the Perfection of it.

Let us now come to the third Particular proposed, which was to shew, that the arguing from Tradition, after the Consignation of the Canon of Scripture, was not only of little use in any Question of Faith or Manners, but was falfely pretended for many Things, and is unsafe in all Questions of present Concernment.

And in order to this, I shall consider the Traditions contended for by the Church of Rome, 1. As they relate to Things necessary; 2. To Things unnecessary, and not belonging to Matters of Faith; and 3. As they relate to Things which, in Fact, are

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The Traditions of Things necessary, are Those which relate to a Trinity of Persons in the Godhead, the Consubstantiality of the eternal Son of God with the Father; the Baptism of Infants; the Procession of the Holy Ghost from the Son; the Doctrine of original Sin; the Deity of the Holy Ghost, and the like That these are Points of Faith I easily allow; but that the Truth of these Articles, and so much of them as is certain and necessary, is likewise contain'd in Scripture, I appeal to all the Writings of the Angles.

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cients, and of all the Moderns who affert and defend them, by Testimonies from Scripture. All the Mysteries of Christ's Nature and Person, of his Divinity and Humanity, are clearly fet down in the Scriptures; but they are not clearly reported by Tradition: For, as it has been observed by many learned Men, the Fathers, in treating these Articles, have fometimes rather expressed themfelves in the Arian, than in the Catholick Style. The other Articles are likewise evidently contained in Scripture, or at least, are by plain and necessary Consequence, deduced from it. When therefore the Writers of the Church of Rome, endeavour to prove all their Articles by Scripture, they plainly invalidate the Pretence of the Necessity of Tradition. For if they affert, that Scripture may be produced for all their Articles, they cannot without lessening the Authority of the Scripture, but allow it to be fuffici-

2. There are also Traditions pretended for Things which are not necessary: such as the Fast in Lent, God-fathers and God-mothers in Baptism, the mixture of Wine and Water in the sacramental Cup, trine Immersion in Baptism, the Apostles Creed, Prayers for the Dead, Unction of the Sick, the Forms of Sacraments, and the perpetual Virginity of the blessed Virgin. Now that these neither

neither are divine nor apostolick Traditions, may appear from their want of proper Proof. They are indeed Ecclesiastical Traditions, and some of them are of great Antiquity: but how far they oblige, I shall endeavour to shew hereaster. In the mean time, let it be observed, that they neither are of the Necessity of Faith, nor the Observation of them, in itself, a necessary and essential Duty of the Christian Religion. And since a Christian may go to Heaven without observing them in certain Circumstances, the Scripture therefore is a full and perfect Canon, without giving any Rules concerning Them.

But there are besides these several pretended Traditions, which, at the best, are only false Articles, wicked Practices, or uncertain Opinions. Such are many of those obtruded by the Romish Church; as the Invocation and Adoration of Saints and Angels, the worshipping of Images, the Doctrine of Purgatory, praying in an unknown Tongue, the Pope's Power to depose Kings, the half Communion, the Doctrine of Indulgences, and the like. Now these are so far from being Apostolick Traditions, that they are some of them apparently false, some of them expreffly against Scripture, and some of them confessedly new, and of very late Date. They are therefore very proper Instances to B b 3

fhew how the Church hath been abused under the Pretence of Tradition.

And after all, the Question of Tradition is wholly useless in the Disputes between the Church of Rome and other Parts of Christendom. Not only because there are many Churches whose Rites and Doctrines are very different from theirs, and who like, wife pretend a Succession and Tradition of the faid Rites and Doctrines per Tempus immemoriale; particularly, the Greek, the Russian, the Abyssine Churches: But also because those Points which they contend for with the Western Churches cannot be proved by universal Tradition; as evidently appears from the pitiful Attempts they are forced to recur to, when they would prove them to be fuch. cream Opinions:

However, upon the Matter of this Argument, there are three further Questions to be considered in order to Faith and Conscience. The first is, Whether there be not any Rules or general Measures of discerning Tradition, or of being reasonably induced to believe, that any Particular is derived down to us by Apostolick Tradition, and is therefore to be admitted, in order to compleat the Rule of Conscience? The second is, How far a negative Argument from Scripture is valid, or obliges the Conscience? And the third, Whether there can be any

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new Articles of Faith, or whether the Creed of the Church may so increase, that what is sufficient in One Age, will be too little in Another?

The first Enquiry is concerning the indi-

rect Ways of discerning Tradition.

It feems unnecessary to dispute, whether Traditions are to compleat the Canon of Scripture, when it cannot be made appear, that there are any Apostolick Traditions of Doctrines which are not contained in Scrip-Thus much however is certain, that no Tradition ought to be received as Apostolick, unless it comes up to, and is approved by the famous Rule of Vincentius Lirinens. And even that Rule is of little use, if it be true, that there is no Doctrine, no Rule of Faith or Manners, which is not contained in holy Scripture, which yet was believed always, and in all Churches, and of all Men in those Churches. But, as it is very probable, that by this Rule he designed to reprove the new Doctrines introduced by St. Austin into the Church, in opposition to the Sentiments of the Fathers which were before him; it will ferve effectually to overthrow all our late Pretences to Tradition. For by this Rule we find it not to be enough, that a Doctrine has been received by the Catholick Church for a Thousand Years together, reckoning upwards from this Period; B b 4 unless

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unless it were also received in the Apostolick Ages, and by the universal Church in those Ages, it is of no Force or Authority. So that if by this Rule of Vincentius, we push our Enquiries as far back as we can, if we carry them not up to the Apostles, we do nothing at all; but if we began there, and made it plain that the Doctrine was theirs, it matters not how little a way it descends. For if it were admitted by all the Apostolick Churches, and by all good and wife Men in those Churches, if any Church should afterwards give it up, it ought not to lessen our Veneration for the Doctrine. But with regard to any Doctrine, how shall we know whether it be really an Apostolick Tradition? Here the Rule of Vincentius properly comes If it can be made appear, that all Churches did, from the Apostles Times down to the Time of the present Enquiry, admit it as true, and report it from the Apoltles; then it is to be received and continued as fuch. For if we can be certain that the next fucceeding Age to the Apostles, did universally receive it as from the Apostles, we are then by no means to reject it. But then of what absolute necessity is this to Faith, if it be true, as was hinted above, that there is no Doctrine so delivered, but what is somewhere contained in Scripture?

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postolick.

And the first Rule is this: That which the Catholick Church believes as an Article of Faith, tho' it be not found in the Scripture, is to be believed to descend from Apostolick Tradition. But there are many Reasons for doubting the Truth and Sufficiency of this Rule. 1. If the Church can err, this Rule will be of no importance: If fhe cannot err, there will be no need either of Scripture or Tradition. 2. There are Thousands who believe fuch an Article to be taught by the Catholick Church; and yet the Catholick Church with them is nothing but their own Party. So that this Rule may ferve every Party that is very numerous; or any, less numerous, by the help of a little Pride and Contumacy. What influence would this Rule have had upon the Donatists of old, or upon those modern, little, peevish Sects, who damn all but their own Congregations? 3. It is absolutely certain, that what one Age takes to be a necessary Doctrine, another Age (I mean of the Catholick Church) did not believe as fuch: And it is not sufficient to make a Doctrine catholick, that it be believed every where,

where, unless it has likewise been received always, and by all Men. The Doctrine of the necessity of giving the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper to Infants, and which was afferted by St. Austin, and Pope Innocentias, prevailed in the Church for fix Hundred Years. But then it is certain, that for fix Hundred Years more, the Church which calls her felf Catholick, believed the con-Now which of these can prove Apostolick Tradition? 4. This Rule would hold only upon supposition that there were no other way of making an Opinion to be univerfally received, but by demonstraring that it took its rife from the Apostles. But there are some who contend, that every Age receives new Revelations: And it is certain that they who believe This, may universally receive Opinious which the Apostles never heard of. Besides, it is not impossible, that a very considerable Man may be imposed upon by another less considerable, but more artful and defigning, and the new Opinion of this good Man, how weakly foever he hath received it, shall proceed strongly upon his Authority. It is notorious, that this was the very Case of Papias, with regard to his Opinions of the Millennium.

The next Rule which is pretended for discovering an Apostolick Tradition, is this: That which the universal Church observes,

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which none could institute but God, and is not found in Scripture; it is necessary to fay, that it was enjoyned by Christ and his Apostles. This Rule must necessarily be false, because it actually deceives those who lay the greatest stress upon it. For their Church, which they fondly call the Catholick Church, uses, as the conveyances of Grace and the holy Spirit, certain Sacramentals; (which none can institute, but Christ the Fountain of Grace) which yet, it were the greatest Absurdity imaginable to derive from Apostolick Tradition. Such are holy Water, baptizing of Bells, hallowing Rofes, Swords, Hats, and the like; the necessity of which can never be derived from Apostolick Tradition; and yet they are fuch Rites, as none but God could be the Author of. if they were good for any thing.

The third Rule is; that what soever the Catholick Church hath observed in all past Ages, may justly be believed to have descended from the Apostles, tho it be such a thing which might have been instituted by the Church. This Rule is the same with that of Vincentius, and is indeed the only good one. But then, it cannot relate to any Matter of Doctrine, but to Rituals only. It is not in the Power of the Church, as such, to appoint Doctrines. For Christ only is the Author and Finisher of our Faith, which

the Church is only to declare and to believe, not to enlarge or contract, alter or diversify. And tho' we cannot, by this Rule, prove it an Apostolick Tradition, that Easter Day was to be kept on the first Day of the Week, because the Asian Churches observed it otherwife; yet we may certainly infer from it, that the distinction of Bishops and Presbyters is an Apostolick Tradition, and the Confecration of the bleffed Eucharift ought to be performed by Ecclesiastical Persons, either Bishops or Priests. By this Rule we may likewise be certain, that the observation of the Lord's Day was derived to us from the Apostles, together with the Practice of bap-How far these Practices are tizing Infants. obligatory upon all Ages, and all Churches, is another Point, which, because it is certain that some Rituals, which were used in the Apostles Times, are now, by several Churches, with good Reason omitted, I shall consider afterwards.

In short, among all the Rules for discerning the real, from the pretended Apostolick Traditions, there is but one which is at all considerable: And that transmits to the Church only a few Rituals, but nothing, which is not contained in the Scriptures, relating to Faith or Manners. It is therefore to little purpose, to search any where but in the Pages of the Old and New Testament,

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for a divine Rule of Conscience. They are certainly sufficient, because they were intended by God to be our only Rule. And yet, if God had intended that Traditions should have been received, in order to compleat the Rule, and oblige the Conscience; it is plain, that he intends it not now, since the Traditions are lost, if ever there were any; or if they are yet in Being, they do not appear, and therefore are to us, as if they were not.

The fecond Question does likewise nearly relate to Conscience, and the regulation of it; since the Scripture is the perfect Rule of Conscience, and contains in it all the Will of God; whether or no, or how far is a Negative Argument from Scripture to prevail?

The Resolution of this Question in great Measure depends upon what has been said before. For if Scripture be a compleat Rule of Faith and Manners, then nothing is an Article of Faith, or Duty of Morality, which is not, in its whole kind, set down in Scripture. However, I shall make some further Resections, upon occasion of this Question.

1. A negative Argument from the Letter of Scripture, will not hold, if the contrary Affirmative can be plainly deduced from any part of it. It is no where directly said in Scripture, that the Holy Ghost is God: God; that he is to be invocated, is no where commanded, nor is there any Example of its having been done, recorded: but it does not therefore follow, that he is not God, or is not to be invocated. For his Deity may, by necessary Consequence, be inferred from what is expressly said of him. The negative Argument therefore is very impersect, and con-

fequently not conclusive.

2. Anegative Argument from a Word or an Expression, cannot be certainly urged for the denying the Mystery signified by that word. The Arians therefore argued weakly, when they said, shew us where, in all the Scripture, the Son is called oposoto, or consubstantial with the Father. For we are certain that God is one. If we find therefore in Scripture, that the Son is truly God, he must necessarily be of the same Substance with the Father, since two Substances cannot make one God.

3. A negative Argument from Scripture is sufficient to prove an Article not necessary to be believed, but does not necessarily prove it not to be true. The Scripture no where says, that the blessed Virgin continued a Virgin to the Day of her Death. Therefore, the other Depinion of her perpetual Virginity ought not to be obtruded upon Men as an Article of Faith; yet, from the unanimous Consent of almost all Churches, the Opinion

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pinion is very probable, and may piously be entertained.

4. When the Question is of lawful, or unlawful, a negative Argument is always valid. If a thing be neither directly, nor consequentially sorbidden in Scripture, it is certainly lawful; and on the other hand, if it be not some way or other there command-

ed and enjoined, it is not necessary.

5. A negative Argument must not be picon use mov, a partial or broken piece of a medium. We must not say, that because St. John in his Gospel, takes no notice of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, therefore the obfervation of that Sacrament is not necessary to Salvation: For the other three Evangelifts had before made it necessary; and probably that was the Reason why he did not. In like manner we do not find in Scripture, nor in the Days of the Apostles, any Instance of baptizing an Infant: But we are not therefore to infer, that no Infants were baptized. The Argument indeed had been good, were there no other way of proving the Practice of Infant Baptisin, but from some remaining Accounts that the Apostles practifed it: But we derive it from the Force of the Words in Christ's Institution, from his Discourse with Nicodemus, from the Analogy it bears to Circumcifion, and the Custom of the Jews in baptizing their Children, from the Effects and and Graces of the Sacrament, and from the absolute necessity of Regeneration. These are some of the principal Rules, with regard to the Force and Obligation of negative Ar-

guments drawn from Scripture.

As to the third Question, whether there may be any new Articles of Faith; or whether the Creed of the Church may fo encrease, that what is sufficient for Salvation in one Age, will not ferve in another? It may be aniwered, whatfoever the Apostles taught we must equally believe, if we equally know it: But it is certain, that all they taught, is not equally necessary to be taught, but only those things, upon which the Piety and Regularity of our Lives, and our hopes of Heaven, have a necessary Dependence. For whatfoever is in Scripture, is indeed alike true, but not equally necessary or useful, nor as easily to be understood, as some other parts of it. But the Question here, is not so much to know, what we must believe, when we know it to be the Word of God; for that is every thing which is the word of God: But the Enquiry is, how much we are obliged to know, how much must be taught to all Christians, how much their Memories and their Hearts must be charged withalk For the Faith of a Christian is not to be made up of every Proposition which is true; but those things which are the Foundation of our ObcObei dear of o

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Obedience to God in Jesus Christ, the Endearments of our Duty, and the Establishment

of our Hope. Individual

2. Now this Foundation, is that necessary Belief, without which, nothing in our Religion could fubfift. Christ and his Apostles laid it fure, and at first made it but of a just Extent with the intended Building. The Faith of Christians was then the most plain and easy, the most simple and wife Institution in the World. It was wholly an Act of living well, and of believing in God thro' Jesus Christ. If we examine the Creeds, or Symbols of Belief, which are in the New Teftament, we shall find them very short; Thou Matt. xvi. art Christ, the Son of the living God; was 16: St. Peter's Creed. We know and believe, John vi. that thou art Christ the Son of the living 69. God, was the Creed of all the Apostles. And, this is Life eternal, that they know thee John xvii. the only true God, and Jefus Christ, whom? thou hast fent, was the Creed which our Saviour himself propounded. There are infinite other Passages in Scripture to the same purpose; so that nothing can be more plain, than that the believing in Jefus Christ, is that main and fundamental Article, upon which all the others are raifed, and on which they depend.

In proportion to this Measure of Faith, the Apostles preached the Doctrine of Faith.

C e St. Pe-

Act ii 24 St. Peter's first Sermon was, that Jefus is ci.iii, 15 Christ, that be was crucified, and rose again from the dead: And they that believed, were immediately baptized. When the Eunuch had confessed that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, Philip forthwith baptized him. And it is observable, that when he had defired Baptism, Philip told him he might have it if he did believe. That Jesus is Christ, that he is the Son of God, that he ought to fuffer, that he died, and rose again the third Day, were the Points which St. Paul most laboriously inculcated in the Synagogues and Assemblies of the People: And this was all that new Doctrine for which the Athenians and other Greeks wondered at him, and took him to be a setter forth of strange Gods, because he preached to them Jesus and the Refurrection. Sometimes indeed, other glorious Things were mentioned, still promoting the Faith and Honour of Jesus, as that he ascended into Heaven, and shall hereafter judge all the World. In short, the whole Christian Faith is comprized in those Things which concerned the Kingdom of God, and the Name of Jesus Christ; that is, such Articles as represent God to be our Lord, and Jesus Christ to be his Son, and the Saviour of the World, that he died for Mankind, rofe again, was glorifyed, reigns over all the World, and, at the general Refurrection, shall judge Men according

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Name only we shall be faved: This is all that the Scripture calls necessary, and is that Faith alone into which all the Church was

baptized.

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This excellent Summary of Faith, we find alfo, with very little addition, offered as fufficient by St. Polycarp, in that excellent Epiftle of his to the Philippians, which St Irenaus to highly commends. This St. Ignatius Ad Magcalls a full knowledge concerning Christ; nelloss Then he enumerates the Generation of the Son from God the Father before all Worlds, his being born of the Virgin Mary, his holy Life, his doing Miracles, his preaching one God, even the Father, his Passion and Crucifixion, his Death and Refurrection, his Afcension, and his sitting at the Right Hand of God, and, that at the End of the World, he is to judge the quick and dead, and render to every Man according to his Works When he had reckoned up these Articles, he adds, he that plainly knows these things, and believes them, is bleffed.

The same Creed, in more words indeed, but not in more Articles, is recited by St. Is renaus, in the second and third Chapters of his first Book, where he says, the Church Lib. 3. throughout the World, being planted by the Cap. 4. Apostles to the end of the Earth, and by their Disciples, bath received this Faith.

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He who of all the Prelates freaks the most powerfully, cannot fay any thing elfe; and he who is weak in speaking, cannot say less: For fince the Faith is one and the fame; be that speaks much cannot say more, and be who speaks little, must not say less. And afterwards, speaking of some barbarous People, who had not the Scriptures, yet were not without the Faith, which he there shortly recites, beginning with the Belief in God the Father, the Maker of the World, and in Fesus Christ, going on with the usual Articles of his being born of the Virgin Mery, his being the Son of God, his reconciling God and Man, his fuffering under Pontius Pilate, his Refurrection, his being received into Glory, and his last Judgment; he adds, they who believe this Faith, are most wife in their Persuasion, and Custom, and Conversation thro' Faith, and they please God. &c.

Now here were, by this time, almost two Ages spent, in which arose the most pestilent Heresies, that ever troubled the Church. Yet there was nothing added to the Christian Creed, no new Articles for the Condemnation of any new Heresy. Whatsoever was against this, was against the Faith. This Faith passing into all the World, was kept with great Piety and Simplicity, no Church varying from it at all. Some indeed added

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fome great Things to it, which were only Appendages to the former: But the fullest and most perfect were the Roman and Ferusalem Creeds, the same which the Greek and Latin Churches use to this Day. Indeed the first and more simple Forms were fufficient: But these fuller forms, being compiled by the Apostles themselves, or by Apostolick Men from the words of Scripture, made no great Alteration; the first were not too little, nor were these too much. Now this Form so described, so delivered, and so received, the Fathers of the Church affirm to be entire and fufficient, and that nothing ought to be added to it. Therefore faid the Writer of the Epistle to St. James attributed to St. Clement, for all that believe these Things contained in the aforesaid Symbol or Creed, and do good Works, is prepared the Salvation of their Souls, and eternal Life.

'Tis true indeed, that the Church of God did explain two of the Articles of this Form, or Creed, that of the fecond, and that of the third Person in the Trinity; the one, in opposition to Arius; the other, to Macedonius: But still they added nothing but what they supposed was really contained in the Apostolic Creed. They had Reasons for doing what they did; and were so little removed from the Apostolick Ages, that their C c 3 Explica-

Explications were more likely to declare the Sentiments of the Apostles: But afterwards, the Case was altered, and their Example was made use of to explain the same Creed, so far, till by explaining the old, Men have inferted new Articles.

And yet, it is agreed on all Hands, that this Faith alone is sufficient. That which can be certainly deduced from these infallible Articles, is as certainly true as the Articles themselves, but is not so to be imposed, because it is not certain, that this or that Explication is right, or that this Confequence is fairly deduced; or if it appears to me to be fairly deduced, it may not appear fo to you. It may therefore accidentally become rather an Instrument of Schism than of Peace; it may divide more than it may instruct; and is plainly a Deviation from the Simplicity of the Christian Faith, in which Simplicity, both the Learned and the Ignorant are more fafe.

But notwithstanding the Inconvenience and Danger of adding to the Apostolick Creed, the Church of Rome pretends to a Power of appointing new Articles of Faith; and for denying that it had this Power, Pope Leo the Xth condemned Luther in his Bull, added to the last Lateran Council. Thus they have added twelve Articles to the Creed in the Council of Trent, with the Preface and Explica

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Postfcript of the Athanasian Creed, damning all those who do not yield the same Assent to the Creed of Trent, as to that of the Apostles.

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What Force the Declaration of any Article by the Church hath, or ought to have upon the Conscience, shall be considered under the Title of Ecclesiastical Laws: But the present Enquiry is, whether any thing can be of divine Faith in one Age, which was not so in the Age of the Apostles. Now here we may venture to fay, that nothing can make any thing to be of divine Faith, but our bleffed Lord himfelf, who is therefore called the Author and Finisher of our Faith. The Apostles themselves could not do it, fince they were only the Stewards and Dispensers of the Mysteries of God. Their Office, as fuch, was only to declare what was necessary, and what was not. No Man, indeed, nor no Society of Men, could do this, but themselves; for none but they knew the Force and Obligation of Propositions of Faith. They were to lay the Foundation; they did fo, and wifely built upon it: But when they commanded that we should keep the Foundation, they only shew us, which was at.

All the World will not be able to tell us, how much is necessary to be believed, and how much not, if it once goes beyond the Apostles Cc4

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Apostles Creed. And yet it was infinitely necessary, that we should at first know how far we were to believe, fince there were fo many false Apostles, each pretending to Authority and Illumination, and endeavouring to introduce a new Word and Doctrine. The Apostles did not only foresee that there would be, but lived to see Heresies and false Doctrines obtruded upon the Church, and professed that it was necessary such false Doctrines should arise. That they should not provide a Remedy for these Mischiefs, is not credible; and yet if any were provided, it was the Creed. This was received and used by all the Church, who professed it to be that Summary of Faith, which was a fufficient Declaration of all necessary Faith, and a powerful Guard against any Herefies that should arise.

obtrude new Propositions not deducible from the Articles of the Creed, nor contained in any Article, and should impose the observation of these, under pain of Damnation; if this be not to have Dominion or Lordship. 2 Cor. 1.24. over the Faith, which St. Peter himself difclaimed, and to Lord it over God's Heritage, which St. Paul forbad any Man to do; I own I do not understand the words, nor have yet feen any Man who did. I shall only further add the excellent words of \* Justinian,

But then, after all this, if any one should

\* Justinian to this purpose, in the Code, part of the Imperial Law, by which almost all the World was governed: Speaking of the Apostolick Creed, part of which he there recites, This right and irreprehensible Faith, which the holy Catholick and Apostolick Church of God doth teach, can by no means receive any Change or Innovation.

To conclude this Question. In our Enquiries of Faith, no Man's Conscience can be obliged by any Anthority, but of Christ enjoining, and his Apostles declaring what is necessary. And if, as † Sixtus Senensis says, all the Orthodox Fathers affirm, that the Creed was drawn up by the Apostles, and they all say, it is a compleat Rule of Faith to Christians; here we ought to rest our Heads and our Hearts, and not render our Faith more intricate by Questions which we do not know are necessary.

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Thus when our bleffed Lord delivered the Precipt of Olarify, end I orgivenels, he made

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<sup>.</sup> Cod. Lib. r. de Sum. Trinit. 2 and ount bezaut

<sup>1</sup> Lib. 2. Biblioth. 5. Omnes Orthodoxi Patres, &c.

ule of this Expression; which then bringed says the enterprise the saltar, and there renegratives

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In the Law of Christ there is no Precept that wholly ministers to the Law of Mofes; but for a Time only, and less principally.

Our bleffed Lord descended upon the Earth, like Rain upon a Fleece of Wooll, and made no violent Changes, but retained all the Morality he found among his Countrymen. He used their Propositions, spoke their Proverbs; he changed their Rites into Sacraments, their Customs into Mysteries; from their Washings, he instituted our Baptism, their Paichal Supper he made the holy Eu-And because he would be fully understood by them, he retained the Mosaic words when he delivered a Christian Precept. For he knew his Father would fend the Holy Ghost to be a certain and infallible Interpreter; and when the Types of Moses were turned into the Substance of Christ, there the typical words likewife, would be explained in the Sense of Evangelical Duties.

Thus when our blessed Lord delivered the Precept of Charity and Forgiveness, he made use of this Expression; when thou bringest thy gift to the Altar, and there remembrest that thy Brother hath ought against thee;

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leave thy Gift at the Altar, first be reconciled to thy Brother, and then come and offer thy Gift: If instead of this, he had said, when thou comest to the Lord's Supper, &c. he had not been understood. But because we know that this is an eternal Precept, part of a moral and eternal Excellency, and a Duty of Christianity; and fince we know that Christ hath destroyed the Fewish Altars, and made useless the Sacrifice of Beasts, by the Sacrifice of himself; and since we are likewise sufficiently informed by what Instruments, and by what Ministrations the Memory of that is preferved, and the Benefits of it conveyed: Therefore we are also fure, that in these words Christ designed to oblige us to be at Peace with our Brother, and with our Enemy, whenever we prefume to offer up our Prayers, or to celebrate the Memory of his eternal Sacrifice.

## RULE XVI.

The Laws of Jesus Christ are to be interpreted to a Sense of present Obedience, according to their Subject Matter.

That, which in its own Nature, is good and necessary any Day, is likewise good and necessary every Day: Therefore there cannot be any essential Duty of Religion, which ought

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ought not to be the work of every Day. To confess God's Glory, to be subject to him, to love him, to live according to Nature, and the Precepts of the Gospel; to be chast, temperate, just; these ought to be the Employment of every Period of a Christian's Life. For the Christian Law is nothing but a perfect Institution of Life, and Understanding. It makes Men wife, and obliges them to be good. It teaches Wisdom, and it prescribes Justice. It makes Men wife and fimple, or in other words, prudent and innocent; and there is no point of our Lives, in which we are permitted to be otherwise. They who, in the primitive Church, deferred their Baptifin till they found themselves in the Article of Death, knew that Baptism was a Profession of Holinefs, an Undertaking to keep the Faith, and to live up to the Laws of Jefus Christ. To put it off therefore, when they thus knew the excellent and important Defign of it, was an egregious Prevarication of their Duty, and enough to ruin all their Hopes, For Men, as foon as ever they are convinced in their Understanding, are obliged in their Consciences; and a Man is obliged to live the Life of a Christian, as soon as ever he believes the Doctrines and Precepts of Christianity. And fince Baptism, in one Relation and Intention of it is only the Publication of our Undertaking to do that, which in our very

very Nature, and by the first and universal Laws of God upon Mankind, we are obliged to do; to refuse Baptism, or to defer it, seems to be a refusing or deferring to acknowledge our natural Obligations, a denying, or not accepting the Duty of living up to the Law of our Nature. For Christianity being, in its moral part, nothing beyond the Perfection of the natural Law, lays no more upon us than God did by the very Reason of our Nature.

Under this Rule it may be very proper and very necessary, to enquire into the Duty of Repentance. For upon this Article the whole Question about a late or Deathbed Repentance; and consequently, the Happiness or Misery of great part of Mankind, will depend. This therefore I take to be the most important Case of Conscience that can possibly arise; and perhaps it may appear to in the Event of the Discourse, as well as in the Event of Things.

Let us therefore, 1. consider this Question: At what time precisely is every Sinner bound to repent of his Sins, so that if he does not repent at that time, he commits a new Sin?

To this Question of, at what time, the Church of Rome answers, at what time soever. For it is with Repentance, as it is with the Precepts of Baptism and Prayer. Neither

ther this Day, nor to Morrow precifely, is it necessary to be baptized; it is necessary only to be baptiz'd fome Day or other: And if we pray half an hour hence, it is as much Obedience, as if we fell upon our Knees this Instant. Add to this, that fince Repentance is a punitive Duty, as well as an affirmative Commandment; it is generally agreed upon, that no Man is obliged to undergo his Punishment till the Instant that the Law determines him; and that therefore, when he is required; when the Day of Humiliation comes; when there is Danger, that if it be not done now, it will not be done at all: Let the wicked Man then look to it, his Repentance cannot be deferred with fafety. This is the Doctrine of the Roman Schools, and of some others, which they have purfued to dangerous and horrid Conlequences.

Even Scotus, and the severer Casuists among them, who affirm, that a Man is obliged to repent every Holiday, do not intend to fay, that by the Laws of God Men are fo obliged, but by the Laws of the Church only. And Medina, and the loofer part of them, deny that the Church hath determined this affirmative and indefinite Command of Repentance, to fo much feverity, as even that amounts to. Particularly, we are told by Reginaldus, that the true and common Opinion

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Opinion of Men is, that the time in which a Sinner is obliged to have Contrition for his Sins, is in the Article of imminent Death, whether natural or violent. And in the mean time, there is no Precept obliging a wicked Man not to persevere in Enmity against God; there is no negative Precept forbidding such a Perseverance. Nay worse if it can be, even to resolve to put off our Repentance, and to resuse to repent till such a Day, is but a small Sin, saith Sotus; it is none at all, saith Medina, it is neither an Act of Impenitence, nor by any means unlawful.

These are horrible Assertions, from the Mouth of a Christian; and are therefore the more carefully to be guarded against, because it concerns the last and most important Issue and Event of Things; and an Error here, may be of most fatal Consequence. For Repentance being the proper Remedy for the Evil of our Souls, if it come too late, or the Application of it be deferred till the Disease becomes unsufferable or incurable; the happy State of our Soul is irretrievable, and wholly desperate.

Now there is no other way of effectually overthrowing these horrible Tenets, than by proving this Proposition; that a Man is positively and directly obliged to repent of his Sin, as soon as ever he hath committed it.

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For, if there be not fomething in the Nature of Sin, which must by no means be retained; if there be not much in the Anger of God, which we must not continue under: if there are not Obligations to the Service of God which must not be put off; if there be not fomething in the Love of God, which should engage us to love him whilst we live; and, if our Lives were not exposed to infinite Hazards, and every Instance of deferring Repentance, did not lay us open to the inexcufable hazard of no repenting at all: Then indeed, and then only, it would follow, that we are obliged to Repentance no otherwise than to Alms, or Prayers; that so, if we perform it at all, we are fafe enough if we perform it at any time: And if we may put it off till to Morrow, we may likewife defer it to the Day following, and so on to the Day of our Death. There is no avoiding this Consequence: For with regard to the affirmative Command, to Morrow and to Day, are both alike; and by God's Law, we are not obliged to repent, till the Day of our Death, if we are not obliged to repent every Day. We must therefore chuse our Proposition: Doth God, when we have been guilty of Sin, permit us to live in it, to forget our Danger, to neglect the Wound that putrefies? Is he pleafed, that we, for whom he hath given his Son; we, whom he hath made Sons by Adoption, and Members of Christ; we, on whom he perpetually sheds his Grace, whom he invites by the kindest Promifes, or makes reftlefs, by the daily Emotions of an unquiet Conscience: Is he, I fay, pleafed, notwithstanding all this, that we should remain in his Displeasure, and continue in that terrible Condition of Things, that, if on any Hour of fo many Days, Weeks, Months, or Years, we chance to die, we should die again, and die for ever? Is this likely? Does he so little value the Services of our Lives, the Vigour of our Youth, the Prudence, the Wildom of our Age? Does he fo little mind the Growth in Grace, the Repetition of pious Acts, the Strength of good Habits, the Ardour and Firmness of our Love; that he will receive an accidental Repentance, a Repentance that comes by chance, that might not have been, and that, very probably, comes too late? For if we ought not to put off our Repentance to the last, we certainly ought not to defer it one Day; the very same Reasons lying against this, which lye against the other. And this will appear from the Reflections which I shall further offer upon this Subject.

1. He who remembers he hath committed a Sin, remembers it either with Joy, or with Displeasure. To remember it with Displeasure, is it self an Act of Penitence;

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Or if it be recollected without either, the Man feems not to confider at all. But tho' a Man feels no fensible Delight in reflecting upon his Sin, yer, if he feels no Displeasure neither, he is still thus far in a State of Sin; that since the Remembrance of it makes him not uneasy, he only wants the same Force in the Temptation, and the same Relish in

himself to make him repeat it.

2. Does not God every Day derive something of his Grace upon our Minds? Does he not continually folicit us, as long as the Day of Salvation lasts? Does he not fend his Spirit to invite, his Arguments to persuade, and his Mercies to endear him to us? Does he design that all this should be ineffectual? And is it not a Sin once to refift and grieve the boly Spirit? And he who recollects his Sin, and knows it to be an Offence against God, and yet repents not upon that Recollection and that Knowledge; does not he refift the holy Spirit, thus moving, thus acting, and thus persuading him? This is the very way of arguing, which the Spirit of God himfelf uses; because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my Hand, and no Man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my Counsel, and would none of my Reproof, I also will laugh at your Calamity, and mock when your Fear cometh. Are we not thefefore

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fore to regard every Call? And is there not a Degree of Guilt in every Refusal? From thefe things put together, it naturally follows, that he who fins, and refuses to repent forthwith, fins twice, and draws upon himself a greater Portion of the Wrath of God.

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3. He who repenteth not as foon as he recollects that he hath finned, does fin further in that very Delay, because he certainly exposes himself to the unavoidable Danger of committing other and new Sins. Let us but reflect on the fad Circumstances of those Men, who have continued long under the neglect of Duty: How dead their Spirit is; how every Day they grow more unwilling to repent; how habitual and stupid their Persuasions are in behalf of Sin; how accidentally hard they grow; and having found a long Impunity, tho' they finned highly many Years ago, yet they find they are still well; how they therefore grow confident and more negligent: we shall find that their Souls are in Declension, gradually and continually removing further from the Friendship of God.

4. The Scriptures every where require of us a speedy Repentance. For God, who commands us to pray every Day, confequently obliges us to repent every Day. And fince we are obliged by God to pray every Day, we are likewise to do that, without which

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which we cannot pray as God intends we should. For the Prayer of a wicked Man, is an abomination to the Lord, said Solomon; and in the Gospel it is said, We know that God heareth not Sinners.

5. When we fee a Man do amis, we reprove him immediately, we forthwith call him off from the Guilt; and every good Man would gladly have his unhappy Friend defift in the midst of the Sin, and be forry that he purfued it fo far. God Almighty deals thus with Man for much the fame Reafons. To continue in Sin, does a Man no real fervice; to abstain from it, hath vast Advan-There is Danger in staying under the tages. Power of Sin; but to chuse to stay under it, is an Act of Love to the worst State, and confequently a direct Sin; and not to repent when we are admonished, is, in Fact, a chufing to abide there. So that from first to last, it evidently follows, that without a new Sin, we cannot recollect that we have finned, un-Iefs, immediately upon the Recollection, we repent: And the strong Inclination we generally shew to retrieve others from a State of Guilt, is no inconfiderable Proof, that every fuch Man is equally obliged to recover himself from it.

6. He who hath finned, and remembers he hath finned, but doth not repent, continues himself all that while in the Wrath of

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God. And can it possibly consist with any Christian Grace, with Faith, Hope, or Charity, with Piety or Wisdom, with the Love of God or of our felves, to brave the Shock of Thunder, to dare the Divine Anger, to be indifferent under the Hatred of the Fountain of Love and Goodness, and unconcernedly to stand excommunicated from Heaven? Can a Man possibly reflect that God hates him, can he despise this Hatred, and

yet be innocent?

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7. If there were nothing more, but that fo long as his Sin is unrepented of, the Man is in an unthriving Condition, he cannot receive God's Grace, cannot hope for Pardon, cannot duly thank God for any spiritual Blesfing, cannot love his holy Word, and must not approach the holy Table: I say, if there were nothing more than the mere want of those Excellencies which were thus kindly, thus beneficially provided for him, it must be a State intolerably evil, to be as it were fo long in the Dark without Fire or Food, without Health or Holiness. But when he is at the same time the Object of the Divine Wrath, and its right-aiming Thunder-bolts are levell'd directly against his Heart, what Madness, what Impiety, or Stupidity must it be to continue in this Condition of Evil, without Fear, and without Love?

8. The Words of St. Austin, which he intended for Exhortation, are likewife argumentative in the Point before us. Hodiernum habes in quo corrigaris, You have this Day for your Repentance. Godobligednot him who lived in the Time of Samuel, to repent in the Days of Moses; That was before Him, and therefore could not be his Time: Nor did he command Manasses to repent in the Days of the Asmonai; their Time was long after his, and therefore could not be his Seafon for Repentance. Every one hath a Day of his own. But when we recollect that God hath commanded us to repent, but hath affured to us no Time beyond the prefent; we shall plainly perceive, that the present was the only Time in which he defigned we should obey him. Against This there cannot possibly be any fair Objection; for it is so in all other Commands whatfoever, unless there be fomething in the Nature of the Action, that is otherwise determinable by particular Circumstances; but in this there is nothing of Relation to Time and Place; it may be done at any Time, and there is an absolute Necessity it should be done. God could no more design that To morrow should be the proper Season of Repentance, than he could design the five and twentieth Olympiad to be your Season for it. For

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For the Commandment is present, but To morrow is not present.

As an Appendage to this great Case of Conscience, it may not be useless to consider a second Question; Whether a Man is bound to repent not only the first Time, but every Time he thinks of his Sin?

It may be answered, that he is; but to feveral Purposes, and in different Measures. And the Reasons why we are perpetually to repent of our past Sins, may be reduced to these two.

I. Whenever we have finned, and fallen under the Divine Displeasure, we dwell for ever after, as it were, in the Dark. We are fure we have finned, and we are fure that God's Anger is revealed against Sinners; but we know not how far this Anger will reach, nor when it will break out, nor in what manner it will be expressed, nor when it will be appealed, nor with what degrees of Sorrow God will be fatisfied, nor how much will be allowed to our Infirmities: I fay, nothing of this we can know, because nothing of it is revealed. But we are obliged to an indefinite Duty, which requires almost all our Time, and all our Power; and yet the Reward of this Duty is hitherto far removed from us, and we are to receive it only in another State. In the mean time, we labour and fear, we fear and hope, we hope and are Dd 4 uncertain uncertain, we pray, but cannot discern the Event of Things. Sometimes we are confident; but that Assurance may possibly arise from the Temper of the Body; and it is never easy to demonstrate that it comes from God; and when we are dejected, it may possibly be only the Effect of Spleen; all may be well with us, much better than we believe it is: But we are under the Cloud, and, which is worst of all, we have generally too much Reason to fear, and be concerned at the Causes of this Darkness, Fear, and

Danger.

2. Besides all this, our Sin expires so slowly, we reprieve it so often, our Repentance is fo frequently interrupted, or made good for nothing; that a Man can hardly ever tell when he hath done, and when he is to begin a-new. For these Reasons it is necessary that we hate our Sins perpetually, and never recollect them but with Sorrow and Remorfe. Not that it is hereby intended that a Man should weep every time he thinks on his Sins; for fometimes he must thank God for his Escape, and rejoice in the Memory of God's Mercies, please himself with the Promifes of Pardon, and exercise himself in Acts of Praise and holy Joy But even these Acts of holy Joy, if they indear our Duty to us, they destroy our Sin; if they engage us to love God, they oblige us to 1 1120 15

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hate Sin; if they are real Acts of Piety, they

are indeed Acts of Repentance.

The Result therefore is this: If by Repentance we mean nothing but Sorrow, then it may have its particular Season, and doth not always oblige to all Times. But if by Repentance we understand a Change of Life, to which Sorrow is only instrumental and preparatory; in this Sense, to repent is a Duty of perpetual Obligation.

### RULE XVII.

Because the Laws of Jesus Christ were delivered in Sermons to a single Person, or a definite Number of Hearers; we are carefully to enquire when those Persons were only personally concerned, and when they were Representatives of the whole Church.

That there is a Necessity of making a Distinction here, is certain; but it is very uncertain how this Distinction is to be made. If we do not distinguish Precept from Precept, Persons from States of Life, and States of Life from Communities of Men; it would be very easy for witty Men to lay Burthens upon Men's Shoulders which they ought not to bear; and scrupulous Persons will too easily lay themselves under unnecessary Obligations;

ligations; and others will dispute themselves out of their Duty, and say, This does not concern me. The best Measures therefore that I know in this Case, are these.

1. There are some Precepts which are univerfally owned to be general; and there are others, which are as univerfally known to be only personal. A few Reflections up. on these, will help us in our Account of others. When Abraham, as a Proof of his Obedience, was commanded to facrifice his Son; the Precept here related only to himfelf and his Son. So when he was ordered to leave his Country, and go to the Land of Canaan; this was wholly personal; for no other Man can think, that if he kills his Son, or leaves his Country, he shall be rewarded for his Obedience. Other Precepts are as certainly and confessedly general. Such were the ten Commandments to the Children of Israel: they were given to all the People, prescribed to the whole Nation, and the Observance of them exacted from them all, for the fame Reasons, and upon the fame Conditions.

2. Whatfoever related only to a Person, or was determined by a particular Circumstance, or limited to a certain Time, passes no Obligation beyond the Limits and Extent of those Circumstances. The Obligation therefore to the Judicial and Ceremonial Law

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of the Jews ceases. The Service which related to a Temple now destroy'd, and which was to be performed by a Priesthood now extinct, can no longer lay the Conscience

under any Obligations.

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3. Whatever Precept was given to Many, if it was followed by another inconfistent with or differing from it; the Former is by the Latter declared to have been personal or particular, relative, temporary, and not generally obliging. When Christ sent out his seventy two Disciples, he commanded them to go without either Sword, or Shoe, or Scrip, and that they should not go into the way of the Gentiles. Now that these Commands were temporary, and related only to that Mission, appears from the following Mission after Christ's Resurrection; by which they were commanded to go into the way of the Gentiles, for they were to teach all Nations.

4. It is not fufficient to prove a Precept to be perpetual and general, that it is, without any external Mark of Difference, annexed to a Body of Precepts which are perpetual and general. Thus in the Decalogue of Moses, we find one Precept for resting upon the seventh Day from the Creation. It is there prescribed with as much Solemnity as the others, and seems to be pressed upon the Minds of the People more laboriously

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than any, tho' without any external Mark of Difference, to distinguish the temporary Obligation of This, from the Perpetuity of the others. And yet the whole Christian Church think themselves absolved from the Observation of this Day, the they are still obliged to observe all the other Precepts. And they may justify themselves herein, from the very nature of the Precept which was merely typical and ceremonial: For tho' to serve God, be a moral, and an eternal Duty; yet to serve him on this or that Day, is by no means moral. And the Reafon, why there were no Marks given to diftinguish This from the other Precepts of the Decalogue, was, because that People, to whom they were all given, were to make no difference between them: But as foon as that Dispensation was to determine, God allowed the Distinction, when St. Paul reckoned This among those things, which were only a Shadow of good Things to come.

fingle Person, or particular Number of Men, which relates to moral Duty, or to a perpetual Rite of general Concernment; that single Man, or that small Number of Men, are the Representatives of the whole Church. This cannot well be disputed; because all moral Precepts are agreeable to the Nature of Man, and, in every Capacity, are neces-

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1, 1. fary to his Perfection. Such Precepts therefore are not to be confined to a few, but must necessarily extend to the whole Species. But then there are some other Precepts, which tho' they are not moral, are perpetual and eternal, and nearly concern every Member of the Christian Church. Such are the Precepts relating to the Sacraments, and other Rituals of Christianity. Now with regard to thefe, let it be observed; that whatever concerns every One by the nature of the Thing; tho' it was at first directed personally, yet it is of general Obligation. Thus, we suppose, that all Christians who have the use of Reason, or who are capable of Laws, are obliged to receive the Holy Communion. For the' the Precepts, do This, and drink This, were personally directed to the Apostles, yet there is nothing in the nature of that Sacrament that appropriates the Observation of the Rite to Ecclesiasticks only. For the Apostle explains it as obligatory upon all Christians, and so it was always understood and practifed. Some indeed have pretended that Part of the Precept concerns none but Ecclefiafticks. The Unreasonableness of this Pretence has been consider'd before; and therefore, I shall here only observe further; that if the Apostles represented Ecclesiastical Officers when Christ said drink ye all of This; then they likewise represented Ecclefiasticks only, when he said, Do this in remembrance of me: And then it will necessarily follow either that all are obliged to receive the Cup, or that none but the Priests are bound to partake of the holy Bread.

6. When the univerfal Church takes herfelf to be obliged by some preceptive Words, tho' they were spoken to particular Persons, yet they are to be understood to be of universal Concernment. Now this Assertion is fupported, not only by the highest Probability, viz. that universal Consent is the best Interpreter of the Difficulties in every Commandment; but also, in that there is in the Church an holy Spirit affifting Her to guide, and warranting us to follow those Measures of Holiness by which she thinks herself obliged. No Interest furely, but that of Heaven and the Love of God, could incline the universal Church to take upon herself the Burden of a Commandment. Were the to decline a Burden, there might be some reafon for fuspicion; but when she takes it up, and thinks herself obliged by a Precept given to the Apostles, to the Pharifees, or to any fingle Person among them; it must be the Necessity that inforces her, or the Charity that invites her, or the Prudence of doing it, that determines her; and therefore the is certainly to be followed. Hence it is that we may be fully fatisfied in the foregomad w

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ing Instance: The primitive Catholick Church did imagine herself bound by the Words of the Institution of the Cup in the blessed Sacrament; and therefore we may safely conclude, that the Apostles, at the delivery of that Precept, were Representatives of the whole Church.

7. When any Precept is given personally, and is yet enforced with the threatning eternal Death; that Precept is of universal Force. And the Reason is, because the Covenant of Life and Death, is the same with all Men; and God, being no Respecter of Persons, deals alike with all Men. And therefore the Words our Saviour spoke upon occasion of the Fall of the Tower of Siloam, were a fufficient Reason for all Men to repent, tho' Repentance had been no where else commanded in Scripture. Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish, was faid only to those who heard him; yet others may easily learn from hence the absolute Necessity of their own Repentance.

This indeed is to be understood only of such Precepts as do not relate to the different States of Men, but are of an absolute and indefinite Nature. Thus when St. Paul said, There is a Necessity laid upon me, and Wo is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel, he here represented those only, who have committed to them the Care of Souls: But when

when he faid, I press forward to the Mark of the Prize of the high Calling, here he fpake of his own Person, That which is the Duty of every Christian; and in that respect; represented the whole Church.

### RULE XVIII.

Evangelical Laws given to one, relating to the Duty of another, do in that very Relation, concern them both; but in differing degrees.

Thus he who has the Care of Souls, is obliged to fee that those under his Care, are chaft and charitable, just and temperate, religious and orderly. He, I fay, is bound to fee that they be fo; but themselves are more bound: Each however in their Proportion. The People are not only obliged by God to behave regularly, but also by their Bishop, or their Priest: And not only God will exact a regular Behaviour from them, but their Prelate must likewise insist upon it; and they must be accountable to him for themselves, fince he will be accountable to God for them.

But if the People do not demean themfelves well, they are not only unchast and intemperate before God and their Bishop, but they are likewise disobedient. I shall here take for granted the Necessity of Infant

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Baptism. But if we enquire upon whom this Necessity lies, it will be hard to fay, upon the Infants; for they are neither capable of Law, nor Obedience; and yet, it is faid to be necessary for them. If we lay the Necesfity upon the Parents, then we certainly abfolve Infants from any fuch Necessity. However, it is impossible to conceive, that the Precept should belong to others, but the Punishment or Evil of not obeying, should belong to the Children, or, that the Happiness of Infants should depend upon the Diligence or Good-will of any Man whatfoever. If others therefore, are obliged, it is necesfary that they bring them to Baptism, but it will not be so necessary that they be brought; that is, they who do not bring them, and not they who are not brought, shall fuffer Punishment. To clear up this Case therefore, this Rule is of great use. It is necesfary that Parents, or the Church should bring Infants to Baptism, and it is necessary, tho not in Point of Duty or Obedience, that Infantsbe baptized: Both therefore are obliged, tho' upon different Reasons; for Baptism must not be omitted. The Parents are obliged at first, but the Children, not till they are sensible of the Necessity and the Obligation. If the former are negligent, they only are answerable for the ill Consequences; but when the Children are able to chuse, Еe they STATE OF THE STATE

they are to supply the Wants occasioned by their Parents neglect, and provide for their own Necessities.

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St. Paul wrote to Timothy concerning the Qualifications requifite to those who were to be made Bishops; but it will not be very eafy to fay, of whom the Defect of fome of those Qualifications shall be required on Bishap must be the Husband of one Wife. that is, he is not to marry whilft his first Wife lives, even tho' she be civilly dead, whether divorced, or banished, or any other way separated from him. But what if he has two Wives at once? Many of the Converts from Judaism, and Paganism, certainly had two Wives at once, and yet were not compelled to put away either of themod If a Man, who is a Polygamift, be made a Bishop; who fins? That is, who is obliged by this Precept ? Is the Bithop who ordains him, the Prince or People that elects him Or the Ecclefiaftic himfelf thus elected and Thefe Questions may be answered, by considering the Nature of a Law, in which the Duty is divided, and feveral Persons have several parts of it incumbent on them. He who chuses, and he who ordains him, are obliged to take care, that he be canonically capable; but the Man thus chosen, is not bound to any thing which is not in his Power. He is not obliged to put her away whom he hath le-

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gally married, nor her, whom, without guilt, he may lawfully retain. But because that which is not attended with Guilt, is not always free from Reproach and Obloquy; they who call a Man to the Office, are to provide against That, and he who is called, ought not to be charged with it. So that, tho' fuch a Man ought not to be burthened with that which is innocent, and, at prefent, out of his Power to remove; fince fuch a Person may be innocently chosen, tho' they who chuse are not entirely innocent: Yet when any thing of the Will is an Ingredient on his Part, he must take care of That himfelf. He must not violently sue for it, or thrust himself upon it. Care was taken that a Bishop should not be a Novice : Yet Timothy was chosen a Bishop at five and twenty Years of Age; yet he was innocent, because it was the Act of others, who came off from their Obligation upon another account. But if he had defired it, or by Violence and Faction, had thrust himself upon the Church with that canonical Infufficiency; he had acted against the Apostolick Canon.

Duties For Parents are bound to rule their Children, and Masters to govern their Servants; and Children are likewise obliged to be governable, and Servants must be obedient. Every Man is obliged to bear his own

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Truth and the Divine Precepts need no Prescription, but have an intrinsick Warrant, and a perpetual obligation: But that which is warranted by Custom only, can be but of humane Authority, and is only accidentally binding. It cannot of it self introduce a divine Law, or Duty. Our Customs ought to be formed only upon the Laws of Christ; but we cannot conclude from thence, that this or that is Christ's Will or Command.

The Design of this Rule however is not to take from Custom its real Use, in the Exposition of the Sense of a Law or Doctrine. For when it is once plain that Christ gave the Law, but uncertain, how he intended it should be understood; Custom may then be of use in the Interpretation of it; especially, the Customs of the earliest and best Ages of the Church; and the farther down such Customs did descend, we may put the greater Considence in them, because we have all the wise and good Men of so many Ages

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But we are then only to allow Custom to be a good Argument, when we have not a better; and a competent Reason to the contrary, is to be preferred to a Cultom of the longest standing. Custom therefore may, under the want of other Proofs, declare the meaning of a Law; but it cannot, of it felf, be a certain Interpreter of the Will of Christ, or a fufficient Warrant of a Law, or immediately oblige the Conscience, as if it were a fignification of the divine Pleasure; much less ought it to be urged in opposition to any words of Scripture, or to right Reason, or to any Arguments plainly deduced from them.

All good Customs are indeed good Warrants and Encouragements; but whether the Customs are really good, is to be examined and proved by the Rule and by the Commandment. Custom therefore, it felf, is but an improper Interpreter of the Commandment, from whence it felf must be marked for good, and juffified; or elfe must be rejected as good for nothing.

Indeed, when Custom strikes in with some other Means of Proof, when it is apparently pious and reasonable, and agreeable to the Analogy of Faith; it contributes much towards the clearing up and establishing of Truth

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Truth, and of warranting the Confeience: But when it stands alone, or has an ill Aspect upon other more reasonable Methods of Proof, it is very suspicious and very dangerous, and is commonly a very ill sign of an ill Cause.

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I shall afterwards, when I come to treat of Ecclesiastical Laws, enquire into the Force of Ecclesiastical Customs, with regard to Practice, and in the Enquiries after Truth. What I would observe at present is This; that the Customs and Usages of the World are but an ill Commentary upon the Precepts of our blessed Lord.

For, 1. Evil is crept into the Manners of the generality of Men; and therefore Cultom is most likely to transmit her Authority to that which ought to be removed and de-

ftroyed.

even upon our moral Behaviour, that Men, overborn by a false Modesty, too easily neglect or discard those Motives which would have enclined them to Truth and Piety. The Customs of the Germans, and some neighbouring Nations, so vilely expound the Laws of Jesus Christ concerning Temperance, that were we to take our Accounts of it from them, we could not distinguish it from Intemperance. And the common Behaviour of the World expounds all the Laws of the blessed Jesus in such a manner, as if they were really

really obligatory at no time, but in the Danger, or in the Article of Death. But furely, that is but an ill Gloss that evades all the honest and holy Purposes of the Law; And, at the last Day, when we shall behold infinite numbers of the damned horried away to their sad Sufferings; it will be but a poor Apology to say, I did only as almost all the World did besides me; and from their Customs, I understood the Laws of the Gospel in a Sense of Ease and Gentleness, and not by the Severity of a sew morose Preachers.

It may not be unseasonable, whilst we are upon this Subject, to enquire, whether the Customs of Jews, or Gentiles, or indefinitely of any Nations, be a just Presumption, that the thing so practised is consonant to the Law of Nature, or is any way to be supposed to be agreeable to the Will of God?

To this some eminent Persons of the Church of Rome answer affirmatively; and are not ashamed to own, that many of their Rites and Ceremonies are not only derived from the Customs of the Heathens, but that they are in themselves prudent, reasonable, and pious: According to the Opinion and Practice of Gregory Thaumaturgus, who, as St. Gregory Nyssen in his Life, reports, consented, in order to allure the common People.

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ple to Christianity, to retain those Dances, and other folemn Sports, which they celebrated in Honour of their Idols, only appropriating them to the Honour of the departed Saints. And Baronius supposes it to be no worse, than the Israelites taking Silver and Brass from the Egyptians, and employing it in the Service of the Tabernacle. \* Bellarmine likewise urges Custom as an Argument for a Purgatory, because the Jews, Turks, and Pagans believed something like it: As if it necessarily followed, that what almost all Nations consent in, must be derived from the Light of Reason common to all Men. From hence likewise + Cardinal Perron argues in behalf of Service in an unknown Tongue; because, not only the Greek, and many other Christian Churches, but even all Religions, the Persians and the Turks use it. ather Pride of Coeming

This Pretence therefore ought to be confidered. And, I. I answer; that it is true, that the Primitive Church did retain some Ceremonies in use among the Heathern; but then they were such as had no Relation to Doctrine, but might decently and properly enough be used in external Ministrations. Such were the Garments of the Priests, Fasts,

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<sup>†</sup> Advert Reg. Jacob. in prima Inflantia, Capit T .V.

Vigils, Processions, Festivals, and the like; and the good Effect of retaining these might then justify the Use of them. For the People, who were most of all affected with exteriour Usages, finding many of their own Customs taken into Christianity; might with less Prejudice acquiesce in the Doctrines of that Persuasion, which so readily complyed

with their ordinary Ceremonies.

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But how convenient foever this might be for the Infant Ages of the Church; yet it ought to have been done with the greatest Caution imaginable. For tho' it served a prefent turn; vet it rendered the Christian Religion less simple and less pure. At first it was, or might have been, a complying with the Infirmities of the Weak: But when these weak Persons are sufficiently instructed in the Religion; and when to diffent from it, is rather Pride or Contumacy, than Infirmity or Ignorance; Compliance or Condescension is no longer Charity, but rather strengthens and encourages their Error. For when Reafons taken from the Religion will not fatisfy the supposed weak Brother; to comply with him, looks like confessing his to be the better way: And when Men of Learning follow the Ignorant to Superstition, they will no longer confider it only as Compliance and Condescension, but as real and necessary Duty. This feems to be the very Danger which God

God provided against, when he expressly Deut. vii. charged the Children of Ifrael, that they fhould abstain from all Communion with the Gentiles, their Neighbours, even in things indifferent; and that they should destroy the very Monuments and Rituals, and the very Materials of their Religion, lest by any little Compliance, they should be too far tempt-

But,

2. If the Customs and Rites be fuch as are founded upon any Point of Doctrine, then whatfoever is derived from Pagan Cultoms, may also be supposed to arise from their Doctrines. And then, to follow their Cultoms in this fense, were to incorporate the Religions, to blend Light and Darkness, to join Christ with Belial. Alexander ab Alexan-dro says, that the Ceremony of sprinkling with holy Water was a Pagan Rite, used in the Sanctifications and Lustrations of the Capital; but because this is not a bare Ceremony of Order, but pretends to some real Effect; because it is derived not from Christ and his Apostles, but from the Gentiles, and is kept in Use by the Doctrine of the real Effect of such Ceremonies; it is by no means to be justifyed. than in the Law of

It is but a mean Pretence, to fay, that if many Nations and Religions agree in such a Rite, or such an Opinion, it may therefore rightly be supposed, that it arose from the

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Light of Nature. For there are but few Propoficions in which Nature can rightly instruct; and we should know but very few things, were we not taught by God, by Experience, or by our Necessities. But if this Pretence would hold, it would establish not only Purgatory, but the worship of Images, a multiplicity of Gods, Idolatrous Services, infinite Superstitions and Absurdities, which cannot at all comport with the Simplicity and Dignity of Christianity.

In short, if it be certain, that Custom cannot warrant any Evil, then those Customs or Rituals which introduce salse Principles, Superstition, Scandal, or Danger, are not to be imitated, but are wholly to be laid aside,

## RULE XX.

he Measure of Perfection and Obedience expected from Christians, is greater than that of the Jews, even in moral Duties common to them and us.

It is of no moment to us, whether or no there are more Precepts in the Law of Moses, than in the Law of Christ. Our Work is set before us; and we are not concerned to know how much They had to do. In most of those Instances, which are, or are said to be, new Commandments, it may be said

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faid of them, as it was faid by the Apostle concerning Charity, this is a new Commandment. That which was before a Commandment, becomes, as it were, a new one, since it is established upon better Promises, and endeared to us by new Instances of infinite Love. It is therefore highly reasonable to think, that tho' this new Commandment superadds nothing new as to the Matter; yet it introduces something new, as to the Manner, or Measure of our Obedience.

Both the Jews and Christians are to pray: But we are commanded to pray ferventby, and continually. They were obliged to Charity, as well as we: But they were to shew it to their Friends and their Neighbours; but we, to our Enemies. And tho' in fome Instances, their Benevolence was to reach as far, yet there are a greater number of Instances to which we are to extend ours. More Men are our Brethren, more our Neighbours, and confequently, more our Duty. They were to forgive upon Submission and Repentance; but we must invite to Repentance, and proffer Pardon. They were to love God with all their Souls, and with all their Strength; we indeed cannot do more than This, but we can do more than They did: For our Strength is greater, and our Minds more enlightened. I. This

I. This Rule principally concerns Christian Churches and Communities of Men: that their Laws be more holy; the Condition of their Subjects more tolerable; that War be not so easily commenced; that it be carried on with more Gentleness; that the Laws of Christ be enforced; that Vice be more effectually discountenanced; that nothing reflecting upon Religion be permitted; that the Priesthood be honoured and fupported in proportion to its Dignity, and the Relation it stands in to Christ's Priesthood; that Virtue be duly encouraged; in a Word, that Christ may in all things be more honoured by us, than Moses was by them; and likewise, that God, thro' Jesus Christ, be more glorified, than he was under the Levitical Government.

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2. This Rule also concerns single Persons; that they are not to satisfy themselves in those Imperfections of Duty, which
were either permitted in the Law, or introduced by the Comments of their Doctors,
or insensibly derived upon them by a general Declination from their first Piety, and the
Corruption of Manners. The Jews would
not take Usury of a needy Jew; but they
would take it of a Stranger: We must consider Men with a more equal Eye, and must
be chatitable to all; for to a real Christian,

ongreater, and tours hinds more collightened

no Man who wants, and asks him, is a

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Stranger: Stranger: Allin Stranger with 3. In Matters of Duty, a Christian is to explain his Obligation with a Regard to Piety, to the Ease of his Brother; and if that cannot otherwise be, to the incommoding himself. But the Jews thought themselves not obliged to go beyond the Letter of the Commandment. In short; there are no pofitive Measures of a Christian's Duty, but That which cannot have no Measures it felf, and That is Love. Now he who truly loves, must think every thing he does too little; and he who thinks thus, will endeavour to do more, and to do it better: And Christians, who have greater Knowledge of God, who more fully understand the nature of Charity, who profess to long after the eternal Love of God, and who are sensible that every increase of Grace is a further step towards Glory and Happiness; need no other Arguments to enforce, nor any other Measure to describe the Duty of this Rule, but only to confider the State of his Religion, the Commandments, the Endearments, the Helps, the Examples, and the Means of it. I only add, that in the Measures of the Practice of this Rule, there is no difficulty but what is made by the thoughtless Lives of Christians, by their lazy, cold, unholy Principles. At the rate in which Christians commonly

how, in what Instances, and in what Proportion, our Obedience ought to be more humble and more diligent, than the Obedience of Moses's Disciples. But they who really love, will do what Love teaches them, and, of course, understand the Rule.

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As to the Interpretation of the Laws of the most holy Jesus, I know of no other important Consideration here to be inserted. But because there are several Pretences of external or accidental Means of understanding them, such as are made use of from the Authority or Reasonings of Men; they will more properly be considered in the Rules concerning Humane Laws, which will be the Subject of the following Book, and where the Reader will find them.

on The End of the second Book.

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